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The Long Line of the Middle English Alliterative Revival:

Rhythmically Coherent, Metrically Strict, Phonologically English

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The Long Line of the Middle English Alliterative Revival: Rhythmically Coherent, Metrically Strict, Phonologically English

by

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Dedicated to my brother Raymond Andrew and to the memory of my brother John Peter

Hit waltered on þe wylde flod went as hit lyste
Drof vpon þe depe dam in daunger hit semed
Withouten mast oþer myke oþer myry bawelyne
Kable oþer capstan to clyppe to her ankreȝ
.
.
.
As þat lyftande lome luged aboute
Where þe wynde and þe weder warpen hit wolde
Hit saȝtled on a softe day synkande to grounde
On a rasse of a rok hit rest at þe laste

Cleanness, lines 415-8, 443-6

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The Long Line of the Middle English Alliterative Revival:

Rhythmically Coherent, Metrically Strict, Phonologically English

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The University of Texas at Austin, 2012

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This study contributes to the search for metrical order in the 90,000 extant long lines of the late fourteenth-century Middle English Alliterative Revival. Using the *Gawain*-poet's *Patience* and *Cleanness*, it refutes nineteenth- and twentieth-century scholars who mistook rhythmic liveliness for metrical disorganization and additionally corrects troubling missteps that scholars have taken over the last five years. 'Chapter One: Tame the "Gabble of Weaker Syllables"' rehearses the traditional, but mistaken view that long lines are barely patterned at all. It explains the widely-accepted methods for determining which syllables are metrically stressed and which are not: Give metrical stress to the syllables that in everyday Middle English were probably accented. 'Chapter Two: An Environment for Demotion in the B-Verse' introduces the relatively stringent metrical template of the b-verse as a foil for the different kind of meter at work in the a-verse. 'Chapter Three: Rhythmic Consistency in the Middle English Alliterative Long Line' examines the structure of the a-verse and considers the viability of verses with more than the normal two beats. An empirical investigation considers whether rhythmical consistency in the long line depends

on three-beat a-verses. 'Chapter Four: Dynamic "Unmetre" and the Proscription against Three Sequential Iambs' posits an explanation for the unusual distributions of metrically unstressed syllables in the long line and finds that the *Gawain*-poet's rhythms avoid the even alternation of beats and offbeats with uncanny precision. 'Chapter Five: Metrical Promotion, Linguistic Promotion, and False Extra-Long Dips' takes the rest of the dissertation as a foundation for explaining rhythmically puzzling a-verses. A-verses that seem to have excessively long sequences of offbeats and other a-verses that infringe on b-verse meter prove amenable to adjustment through metrical promotion. 'Conclusion: Metrical Regions in the Long Line' synthesizes the findings of the previous chapters in a survey of metrical tension in the long line. It additionally articulates the key theme of the dissertation: Contrary to traditional assumptions, Middle English alliterative long lines have variable, instead of consistent, numbers of beats and highly regulated, instead of liberally variable, arrangements of metrically unstressed syllables.

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Chapter One: Tame the 'Gabble of Weaker Syllables'

English poetic rhythms reached remarkable heights of richness in the second half of the fourteenth century. During this period, halfway through the four-century era of Middle English, poets of the English West Midlands produced a wonderfully expressive collection of alliterative verse that shares many qualities with great antecedent and subsequent English poetic traditions. This poetry had its origins in Anglo-Saxon and Germanic tradition, and the movement that produced it has come to be called the Middle English Alliterative Revival. Fortunate for modern enthusiasts, the extant corpus comprises 90,000 long lines.

Readers come to this poetry usually by way of William Langland's *The Vision of Piers Plowman* and the anonymous *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*. Langland, the *Gawain*-poet, and others cultivated a rhythm made coherent by rigorous management of metrically unstressed syllables; thus, readers, leaping, hopping, and stutter-stepping their way through the phrases in works like the *Gawain*-poet's *Cleanness* and *Patience*, may delight in the spirited measures. Simultaneously, readers puzzle over whether there is a meter—any recurring pattern of beats and offbeats—since the verses, at every turn, dodge the regularity found in the contemporaneous work of London's Geoffrey Chaucer.

For centuries scholarly works and handbooks, in erroneously calling Middle English alliterative meter 'strong-stress', neglected what some readers more recently have come to recognize as metrical precision. Hundreds of years after the Alliterative Revival, and with little guidance in the way of poets' explanation of their craft, scholars of the

nineteenth and twentieth centuries began to vindicate readers' sense of regularity amidst variation. The result has been a remarkably robust set of metrical guidelines. Karl Luick's philological work of the late nineteenth century and work in the 1980s and 1990s have brought groundbreaking discoveries and opened up new areas of inquiry. A more recent spate of scholarly research and published results in this field——multiple conference papers, dissertations, journal articles, and books since 2006——makes this doctoral project timely.

Some details of the history of scholarship in the field help to contextualize this work on how words fit into the metrical template and how many beats a long line can have. For a long time scholars failed to perceive clear patterns of beats and offbeats. Unable to explain the variation, they declared it random. W.K. Wimsatt, Jr., and Monroe C. Beardsley write, 'Only the major stresses of the major words count in the scanning,' and they refer to the metrically unstressed syllables as a 'clutter' and a 'gabble of weaker syllables'.[1] In the 1980s and early 1990s, Thomas Cable and Hoyt N. Duggan independently and nearly simultaneously presented evidence challenging this standard story. Over the ensuing decade, medievalists came to acknowledge that the poetry exhibited an element of syllable-count. The last few years have brought a new series of important discoveries by Ad Putter, Judith Jefferson, and Myra Stokes and by Nicolay Yakovlev.[2] The 2009 *Yearbook of*

[1] William K. Wimsatt and Monroe C. Beardsley, 'The Concept of Meter: An Exercise in Abstraction', *PMLA,* 74 (1959), pp. 585-98

[2] See Nicolay Yakovlev, 'The Form of [the] Weak Dip in Late Middle English Alliterative Poetry', paper presented at Leeds International Medieval Congress, Leeds, UK, 2006; Ad Putter, Judith Jefferson, and Myra Stokes, *Studies in the Metre of Alliterative Verse*, Medium Aevum Monographs, New Series, 25 (Oxford: The Society for the Study of Medieval Languages and Literature, 2007); Ad Putter, 'Metre and the Editing of Middle English Verse', *Poetica: An International Journal of Linguistic-Literary Studies,* 71 (2008), pp. 29-47; Nicolay Yakovlev, *The Development of Alliterative Metre from Old to Middle*

Langland of Studies has multiple articles on recent findings in the field, and in her 2011 dissertation Megan Hartman has used many of the findings to compare Middle English alliterative verse with Old English verse.[3]

The present chapter explains what the latest scholarship shows about the best understood components of Middle English alliterative meter. This explanation covers the partitioning of the long line into verses, counts of metrically stressed syllables per verse and per line, unique requirements at the end of the long line, distributions of metrically unstressed syllables, and vowel constraints on isolated metrically unstressed syllables. An outline of the several components of the meter that remain poorly understood follows this summary. Some sensible assumptions about some of these parts of the meter provide a foundation for investigating the components most in need of clarification. The rest of the chapter explains the difference between metrical stress and linguistic accent and shows how this distinction sheds light on fundamental differences between Middle English alliterative

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English (unpublished doctoral dissertation, Wolfson College, University of Oxford, 2008); Judith Jefferson and Ad Putter, eds., *Approaches to the Metres of Alliterative Verse*, Leeds Texts and Monographs, New Series, 17 (Leeds: School of English, University of Leeds, 2009); and Noriko Inoue and Myra Stokes, 'The Caesura and the Rhythmic Shape of the A-Verse in the Poems of the Alliterative Revival', *Leeds Studies in English,* 40 (2009), pp. 1-26. Thomas Monroe Cable, 'Progress in Middle English Alliterative Metrics', rev. of *Studies in the Metre of Alliterative Verse*, by Ad Putter, Judith Jefferson, and Myra Stokes, and *Development of the Alliterative Metre from Old to Middle English*, by Nicolay Yakovlev, *Yearbook of Langland Studies*, 23 (2009), pp. 243-64, reviews much of this work.

[3] See Nicolay Yakovlev, 'Prosodic Restrictions on the Weak Dip in Late Middle English Alliterative Verse', *Yearbook of Langland Studies,* 23 (2009), pp. 217-42. In this article's title, Yakovlev uses the term 'weak dip' for what the present study refers to as 'short dip'. See also Megan E. Hartman, *The Hypermetric Line in Germanic Alliterative Meter* (unpublished doctoral dissertation, Indiana University, 2011), and Donka Minkova, 'On the Meter of Middle English Alliterative Verse', in *Towards a Typology of Poetic Forms: From Language to Metrics and Beyond*, ed. by Jean-Louis Aroui and Andy Arleo (Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 2009), pp. 209-27.

verse and Chaucer's verse. Understanding Middle English alliterative verse as a fundamentally different mode of meter from Chaucer's is critical to making progress in Middle English alliterative metrics.

Chapters Two and Three build on Chapter One's demonstration of the Middle English alliterative verse's key distinguishing characteristics, especially the close connection of this poetry's rhythms to the accentuation of everyday speech. Recent studies are evaluated on the basis of their observance of the key principles covered in Chapter One. The weaknesses of these recent studies, especially their implication that poets wrote many long uninterrupted strings of metrically unstressed syllables, are linked back to wrong assumptions. An empirical comparison of the rhythms implied by the recent studies to the rhythms implied by the present study's theory further vindicates the model of Chapter One. The comparison establishes the legitimacy of three-beat verses by showing that rhythmic consistency across the caesura and throughout the poems depends on them. This demonstration, together with a nuanced understanding of the nature of the metrical template in the various positions of the long line, leads to a description of the operation of metrical demotion and metrical promotion in highly specific environments.

Chapter Four shifts the focus away from line-wide distributions of different groups of syllables to the local environments in which certain stretches of metrically unstressed syllables occur. Statistical evidence shows that metrical patterns like ...x/x/... (as in the first four syllables of line 2 of *Cleanness*: *And rekken vp* alle þe resoun3 þat ho by ri3t aske3 'And count up all the narratives that she requires by right') occur frequently but that longer patterns of even alternation (e.g., ...x/x/x/...) are remarkably rare. Whereas Chaucer wrote

thousands of lines with perfectly alternating metrically stressed and unstressed syllables, Middle English alliterative poets avoided such patterns so reliably that one must wonder whether such avoidance was a guiding principle. Such 'symmetrical' patterns as ...xx//xx... and ...xxx//xxx... also are extremely rare. At the heart of this meter seems to lie a proscription against semblance of local repetition.

Chapter Five makes the case for a more active role for various kinds of promotion in Middle English alliterative verse. It builds on the present chapter's demonstration of the poetry's link to normal speech, Chapter Two's characterization of the b-verse's metrical template, and Chapter Three's legitimization of three-beat a-verses. All comments about promotion, moreover, prove consistent with Chapter Four's account of the avoidance of even alternation.

The conclusion synthesizes the findings of the previous chapters. First it shows how tension operates in the poetry. It then asserts that, contrary to traditional assumptions, Middle English alliterative long lines have variable, instead of consistent, numbers of metrical beats and highly regulated, instead of liberally variable, arrangements of metrically unstressed syllables. This technical proposition has theoretical implications and practical value. Chaucer's iambic pentameter might lull us into thinking that beat-counts make a meter, but the contemporaneous Middle English Alliterative Revival turns that view on its head. There are multiple ways to establish poetic rhythm in English. As for practical value, the findings give editors of texts more evidence on which to base editorial decisions. Finally, this technical work in prosody has important pedagogical value: By defining the

meter, the study makes the poetry more accessible to readers and makes it a better target for the type of close reading that professors expect from students.

An individual long line in this poetic tradition is made up of two separate verses, called the a-verse and the b-verse. Although a good deal of work has been done to show metrical similarities between these two verses, they are best understood as metrically divergent.[4] Individual verses have either two or three beats. Separating these beats from each other and from verse boundaries are metrical positions called 'dips'. Usually, at least one dip per verse contains multiple metrically unstressed syllables; such dips are called 'multisyllabic dips'.[5] The following verse has two beats and two multisyllabic dips:

x x / x x / x

Be þay fers, be þay feble forlote3 none

'Be they strong, be they weak, overlook none'

C.101[6]

A dip containing only one metrically unstressed syllable or no syllable at all is called a 'short dip'.[7] As the only metrically unstressed syllable separating the final beat of C.101a from the end of the verse, *-le* of *feble* constitutes a short dip. Some scholars argue that whatever metrical form an a-verse takes, its rhythm cannot be one that meets the guidelines of the

[4] For similarities and differences see Yakovlev, *Development*, pp. 156-8.
[5] For 'multisyllabic dip' metrists have used the terms 'strong dip', 'long dip', and 'heavy dip'. Multisyllabic dips of four or more syllables are called 'extra-long dips'.
[6] The study uses the following abbreviations for poem titles: C for *Cleanness*, CT for *The Canterbury Tales*, P for *Patience*, *Piers* for *The Vision of Piers Plowman*, and SGGK for *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*. C.101 refers to line 101 of *Cleanness*; C.101a refers to just the first verse of that line.
[7] For the term 'short dip' other metrists have used 'weak dip'.

b-verse.[8] The a-verse is often thought of as the 'otherwise anything' case, though it is becoming clear that there are additional minimum requirements.

In the continuing progress of recent scholarship, valid rhythms for the b-verse are becoming a fairly well-defined set. The b-verse has exactly two beats. The b-verse must have exactly one multisyllabic dip and exactly two short dips. The first beat, like a fulcrum displaced from a balance's center of gravity, links one short dip and one multisyllabic dip. As the following verses show, the short and multisyllabic dips can flank the first beat in either possible order: short, then multisyllabic, or multisyllabic, then short:

x / x x / x

For þou in **r**eysoun hat**ȝ** **r**engned and **r**y**ȝ**twys ben euer

'Because you have reigned with reason and have always been righteous'

C.328

x x x / x/ x

For-to **s**aue me þe **s**ede of alle **s**er kynde**ȝ**

'In order to save the seed for me of all [the] various species'

C.336

Finally, as is the case in C.328b and C.336b, a second beat and then exactly one metrically unstressed syllable must conclude the b-verse.

These metrical constraints produce patterns of beats and offbeats that can perplex readers raised on the rhythms of lullabies and nursery rhymes. Even readers familiar with

[8] For the metrical dissimilation of the two halves of the long line from each other, see Thomas Monroe Cable, *The English Alliterative Tradition*, Middle Ages Series (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1991), pp. 91-4.

the last five hundred years of the English poetic canon can be puzzled by fourteenth-century alliterative verse. Such readers tend to tune into counts of metrically stressed syllables per line (typically five in the iambic pentameter) and counts of syllables per line (typically ten in the iambic pentameter). A meter that counts metrically stressed syllables per line and total syllables (whether metrically stressed or not) per line is called a syllable-stress meter.[9] Middle English alliterative long lines, as strictly regular as they are in some ways, have a variable count of syllables per line. Some scholars believe that the count of beats per line remains constant at four, but the results of this study challenge that belief. Neither metrically stressed syllables nor total number of syllables stays constant. Virtually all metrists agree that Middle English alliterative verse lacks the type of template that underlies the most widely read English poetry. This combination of features sets Middle English alliterative verse apart from syllable-stress verse and can seem altogether irregular to modern readers.

Strict adherence to non-iambic metrical constraints, amidst variation in lengths of strings of offbeats and in counts of beats per long line, produces rhythmic liveliness in poems like *Cleanness* and *Patience*. The mixture is carefully crafted in that the strict meter

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[9] Donka Minkova and Robert P. Stockwell, 'Emendation and the Chaucerian Metrical Template', in *Chaucer and the Challenges of Medievalism: Studies in Honor of H.A. Kelly*, ed. by Donka Minkova and Theresa Lynn Tinkle (Bern: Lang, 2003), pp. 129-41 (130), point to the number of syllables per line and 'metrical alternation' as the two guiding principles; a regular count of metrically stressed syllables per line is implied there but not stated as a principle.

Syllable-stress meters have also been called accentual-syllabic meters. The word 'accentual' in the term 'accentual-syllabic meter' misleadingly suggests consistency in the number of linguistically accented syllables, rather than metrically stressed syllables, per line; therefore, the term should be avoided in discussions of meters like Chaucer's, Milton's, and Shakespeare's. Calling these meters 'syllable-stress meters' makes more sense.

has mandatory variation built into it. In addition to this variation in dip-lengths, there is variation built in at a higher level: There is growing support for the idea that the a-verse is the 'otherwise-anything' case——that it cannot have a metrical pattern that would be acceptable in the b-verse. This principle will be called 'metrical differentiation of the two half-lines'.[10] It is clear that typical b-verse patterns like x/xxx/x and xx//x are generally avoided in the a-verse, but some a-verses do seem to have such patterns. By addressing these exceptions, Yakovlev has gone a long way toward proving that there is in fact a categorical proscription against b-verse patterns in the a-verse. Consider one of the rare a-verses with a pattern supposedly allowed only in the b-verse:

/ x x / x

Jonas al **j**oyles and **j**anglande vp-ryses

'Jonas, completely unhappy, and grumbling, rises up'

P.433

P.433a has two beats. There is exactly one multisyllabic dip, which follows the first beat. Instead of a multisyllabic dip on the other side of the left beat, there is no syllable at all; this 'zero-dip' counts as the metrically required short dip the same way that a verse-initial one-syllable dip would. Finally, the verse ends with exactly one metrically unstressed syllable. This a-verse therefore seems to meet all of the requirements of the b-verse.

There is one feature of P.433a, though, that the b-verse cannot have. It has a syllable with a full vowel——the *-les* of *joyles*——occurring alone at the end of it. Although the b-verse must end with exactly one metrically unstressed syllable, that syllabl cannot have

[10] Putter, Jefferson, and Stokes, *Studies*, p. 232, use the phrase 'a-verse and b-verse asymmetry'.

a full vowel; the b-verse must end with exactly one metrically unstressed syllable whose vowel is reduced. By showing that P.433a actually does have a pattern that the b-verse cannot have, Yakovlev vindicates the belief of some metrists that a-verses cannot have b-verse metrical patterns. Full vowels can occur alone at the end of an a-verse, but not alone at the end of a b-verse.[11] P.327a also approximates but falls just short of a b-verse metrical pattern:

/ x x x / x

Prayande him for **p**ete his **p**rophete to here

'Praying to him for pity to hear his prophet'

P.327

Strict observance of the metrical differentiation of the two half-lines accounts for the controlled liveliness of the poetry.

Discoveries of such robust metrical principles have been accumulating and are pointing to a remarkable generalization. The heart of the meter is the opposite of what readers have always assumed. Instead of a 'strong-stress' pattern, with randomly varying counts of metrically unstressed syllables between metrically stressed syllables, the meter has as a defining feature precise counts of metrically unstressed syllables. Add to that Yakovlev's context-sensitive constraints on vowel fullness and a rich meter begins to

[11] In addition to Yakovlev, *Development*, pp. 154-67, 196, see Yakovlev, 'Prosodic'. For the sake of clarity, the present study uses the term 'full vowel' in place of Yakovlev's two terms 'non-schwa vowel' (in *Development*) and 'non-weak vowel' (in 'Prosodic', p. 227 n. 21). 'Reduced vowel' is the corresponding term for Yakovlev's 'schwa', which is, for example, the vowel sound heard in the second syllable of the Modern English word *even* /ivən/. Just as is the case in this example, words identified in this study by their spelling appear in italics; text between slashes represents word pronunciations. MdnE glosses appear in single quotation marks.

emerge. Chapter Three takes the next step in overturning the varying-offbeat-count–steady-beat-count model: It shows that the number of beats (metrically stressed syllables) in the a-verse does not remain constant. In evaluating this hypothesis, the study raises the possibility of showing that the meter is a combination of regulation and variation that constitutes the opposite of what metrists have long assumed.

Rather than as strong-stress (which holds only beat-counts steady), the metrical regulation characteristic of the Alliterative Revival should be thought of as a kind of syllable-counting, albeit different from Chaucer's syllable-counting. Although the precise nature of Middle English alliterative verse's connection to earlier poetry remains uncertain, it surely has affinities with it. From the fifth century to the twelfth century (with extant texts from as early as the seventh century), poets writing in Old English developed the native tradition of alliterative poetry. Middle English poets later made their own mark on that tradition. Although the late medieval representatives of this tradition vary in style by century and region, a helpful distinction is made between, on the one hand, the early Middle English alliterative verse of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries and, on the other hand, the late Middle English alliterative verse of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. The opening lines of the anonymous *Patience*, a 531-line late fourteenth-century poem, give a sense of the rhythms typical of alliterative verse in the closing centuries of the Middle Ages:

Pacience is a **p**oynt þaȝ hit dis**p**lese ofte
When **h**euy **h**erttes ben **h**urt wyth **h**eþyng oþer elles
Suffrance may a**s**wagen hem and þe **s**welme leþe
For ho **qu**elles vche a **qu**ed and **qu**enches malyce

'Patience is a virtue, though it displeases often.

When heavy hearts are hurt by abuse or other things,

Forbearance may appease them and soothe the burning anguish,

For she quells every evil and suppresses malice....'

P.1-4[12]

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[12] *Patience*, ed. by J. J. Anderson, Old and Middle English Texts (New York: Barnes and Noble, 1969). Dates of composition of all Middle English poems quoted are estimated to be in the late fourteenth century unless otherwise noted. Boldface type indicates an alliterating stave, which, as Chapter Two explains, often serves as a cue to metrical stress. Other poems are quoted from *Beowulf and the Fight at Finnsburg*, ed. by Friedrich Klaeber, 2nd supplement, 3rd edn (Boston: D. C. Heath and Company, 1950); Geoffrey Chaucer, *The Riverside Chaucer*, ed. by Larry D. Benson, 3rd edn (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1987); *Cleanness*, ed. by J. J. Anderson, Old and Middle English Texts (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1977); *Havelok*, ed. by G. V. Smithers (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987); William Langland, *Piers Plowman: A New Annotated Edition of the C-Text*, ed. by Derek Pearsall, Exeter Medieval Texts and Studies (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 2008); William Langland, *The Vision of Piers Plowman: A Critical Edition of the B-Text Based on Trinity College Cambridge MS B. 15. 17 with Selected Variant Readings, an Introduction, Glosses, and a Textual and Literary Commentary*, ed. by A. V. C. Schmidt (London: Dent, 1978); *Old and Middle English, c. 890-c. 1400: An Anthology*, ed. and trans. by Elaine Treharne, 2nd edn, Blackwell Anthologies (Malden, Massachusetts: Blackwell Publishing, 2004) (for *The Battle of Maldon*); *The Pearl Poems: An Omnibus Edition*, ed. and trans. by William Vantuono, 2 vols, The Renaissance Imagination: Important Literary and Theatrical Texts from the Late Middle Ages through the Seventeenth Century, 5 (New York and London: Garland, 1984) (used for quotations of *The Pearl*); and *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, ed. by J. R. R. Tolkien, E. V. Gordon, and Norman Davis, 2nd edn (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1967). Unless otherwise noted, MdnE translations are quoted from *Beowulf: A New Verse Translation*, trans. by R. M. Liuzza (Toronto: Broadview Literary Texts, 2000); Geoffrey Chaucer, *The Canterbury Tales*, ed. and trans. by David Wright (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1985); *Havelok*, ed. by Smithers; William Langland, *William Langland's Piers Plowman: The C Version*, ed. by George Demetrios Economou (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1996); *Old and Middle English, c. 890-c. 1400: An Anthology*, ed. and trans. by Elaine Treharne (for translations of *The Battle of Maldon*); William Langland, *Will's Vision of Piers Plowman*, ed. by Elizabeth D. Kirk and Judith H. Anderson (New York: W. W. Norton, 1990) (for B-text translations); and *The Pearl Poems: An Omnibus Edition*, ed. and trans. by William Vantuono (for glosses of lines from all four of the *Gawain*-poet's poems).

These long lines have the characteristic features not only of frequent, systematic alliteration, but of distinctly non-Chaucerian arrangements and counts of prominent and less prominent syllables. Compare the rhythm of the long lines above to the opening of *The Canterbury Tales*:

> Whan that Aprill with his shoures soote
> The droghte of March hath perced to the roote
> And bathed every veyne in swich licour
> Of which vertu engendred is the flour
> 'When the sweet showers of April have pierced
> The drought of March, and pierced it to the root,
> And every vein is bathed in that moisture
> Whose quickening force will engender the flower....'
>
> Chaucer, CT.'General Prologue'.1-4 (1386-1400)

The even alternation of metrically stressed and unstressed syllables dominates Chaucer's poetry.

Forcing Chaucerian alternation on *Patience* sheds further light on the comparison of these two metrical modes. The following passage demonstrates this point. Notice P.455a's hypothetical pattern of perfect alternation between metrically stressed and unstressed syllables. Reading the passage aloud while tapping to the beats shows that in the context of Middle English alliterative verse the even alternation of beats and offbeats in P.455a can be conspicuous and jarring.

x / x / x x / x / x x / x

Þe gome glyȝt on þe grene graciouse leues

x x x / x x / x x / x x / x

Þat euer wayued a wynde so wyþe and so cole

*x / x / x / x / x x / x / x[13]

Þe schyre sunne hit vmbe-schon þaȝ no schafte myȝt

'The man glanced at the green beautiful leaves,

Which continually waved in a wind so [mildly] and so [coolly].[14]

The bright sun gleamed around it, though no beam could'

P.453-55

Juxtaposing the two types of rhythm within this single passage helps to show their different effects on the reader. Reading P.455a properly, without a metrical stress on *vmbe-*, dodges the disruptive even alternation.

One goal of the present study is to articulate this felt difference between Middle English alliterative and Chaucerian rhythms—to provide a concrete explanation based on phonological principles. Where the work of the 1980s in this field refuted part of the 'strong-stress' model of the meter by discovering clear regulation of metrically unstressed syllables, the work of this decade is challenging the strong-stress model from every angle.

[13] The asterisk here and throughout the study indicates an inaccurate or incomplete scansion. A couple of nonce uses of asterisks for other reasons are individually explained later in the study.

[14] Since ME adverbs often took an analogical final *-e*, reading adverbial 'coolly' in place of Vantuono's 'cool' creates the necessary line-final single metrically unstressed syllable. In turn, reading 'mildly' in place of 'mild' ensures parallel grammatical structure in the gloss for P.454b.

Metrists are following up on Yakovlev's finding of patterns in vowel qualities (reduced vs. full) by discovering more patterns. Some scholars, moreover, believe that the number of metrically stressed syllables in the long line, instead of being rigidly confined to four, varies between four and five and that this variation is realized through two- and three-beat a-verses. No more should readers think of Middle English alliterative verse as having a regular number of metrically stressed syllables and irregular numbers of metrically unstressed syllables.

These significant changes in the standard account of Middle English alliterative meter recall similar developments in Old English alliterative metrics. In the centuries immediately preceding the rise of the Middle English language (a rise that began in the twelfth century), English alliterative poetry consisted of lines with two parts, known as 'hemistichs' or 'half-lines'. Syntactic and, in modern editions, visual separations make the mid-line partition clear, as in these long lines from *The Battle of Maldon*:

...**b**rocen wurde

Het þa **h**yssa **h**wæne **h**ors forlætan

feor a**f**ysan and **f**orð gangan

hicgan to **h**andum and to **h**ige godum

'...may have become broken.

Then he commanded each one of the warriors to let his horse go,

to drive it far away and to advance on foot,

to turn thoughts to hands and to be of good courage.'

Maldon.1-4 (tenth century)

Many statements of the meter of poems like *Maldon* cloud its true character and thus fail to pinpoint its relation to syllable-stress verse. Some scholars have claimed that there are always two strong stresses per half-line, but this is not the case in poems such as *Beowulf* and *Maldon*. Sometimes there are more than two strong stresses; sometimes only one. In spite of what the term 'strong-stress' suggests, metrically unstressed syllables are counted. While there is room for flexibility in dip-lengths at the beginning of the OE verse, dips at the end of the verse are usually only one syllable long. A more accurate statement of the meter emphasizes the presence of four positions per Old English verse, each filled by some combination of metrically stressed and unstressed syllables. According to nearly unbending rules, these combinations 'count' as metrically stressed syllables or dips.[15] It is not an absence of syllable-counting but the details of the counting that set Old English alliterative metrics apart from iambic pentameter. This fact has led Cable to assert that '"accentual" poetry does not form a continuing tradition in English poetry'; in fact, 'there never has been' an English accentual meter.[16] The twelfth century brought a break in the Old English poetic tradition, one that still leaves scholars debating whether what came afterwards can best be described as an evolution of Old English alliterative poetry or an artificially similar new type of verse. Constraints on the placement of metrically stressed and unstressed syllables are important considerations in these debates.

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[15] See Thomas Monroe Cable, *The Meter and Melody of Beowulf*, Illinois Studies in Language and Literature, 64 (Urbana, Chicago, and London: University of Illinois Press, 1974), especially chap. 7, 'The Abstract Pattern of Old English Meter', pp. 84-93.
[16] Thomas Monroe Cable, 'Foreign Influence, Native Continuation, and Metrical Typology in Alliterative Lyrics', in *Approaches to the Metres of Alliterative Verse*, ed. by Judith Jefferson and Ad Putter, Leeds Texts and Monographs, New Series, 17 (Leeds: School of English, University of Leeds, 2009), pp. 219-34 (220), and Cable, 'Progress', 247.

This dissertation will assess whether the evidence from Middle English alliterative verse is consistent with the assertion that there never has been an English accentual meter. A comparison of the Old English and Middle English alliterative meters can help one to address this issue. The first topic in this comparison is the regular separation of long lines into half-lines in both Old and Middle English alliterative verse. The half-line metrical and syntactic organization was considered uniquely characteristic of Old English alliterative verse until the 1980s. As late as 1984, A.T.E. Matonis doubts the structural importance of mid-line syntactic breaks: 'It may be descriptively convenient to refer to a-lines [a-verses] and b-lines [b-verses], although to what extent the distinction is a critical tool rather than a reflection of the actualities of the verse should be kept in mind.'[17] At about the same time, though, other prosodists were beginning to recognize a structurally important caesura. The authors of the Middle English long lines also were writing half-lines, sometimes referred to individually as 'verses' (the first of the line being the 'a-verse', the second the 'b-verse').[18] With verses separated here by carriage returns in order to emphasize the metrical autonomy of each half-line, *Cleanness* opens:

Clannesse whoso **k**yndly	(the first a-verse)
cowþe **c**omende	(the first b-verse)
And **r**ekken vp alle þe **r**esoun3	(2a)
þat ho by **r**i3t aske3	(2b)

[17] Ann Therese E. Matonis, 'A Reexamination of the Middle English Alliterative Long Line', *Modern Philology,* 81 (1984), pp. 339-60 (346).
[18] Note that whereas a late Middle English alliterative 'verse' is one of the two half-lines constituting the 'long line', a Chaucerian 'verse' is the same thing as a full (typically ten-syllable) Chaucerian 'line'.

Fayre **f**orme3 my3t he **f**ynde (3a)

in **f**or**þ**ering his speche (3b)

And in **þ**e **c**ontrare **k**ark (4a)

and **c**ombraunce huge (4b)

'Whoever could commend cleanness properly

and count up all the narratives that she requires by right,

splendid themes could he find for fashioning his speech,

but in the contrasting themes [about uncleanness] great distress and disaster'

C.1-4

Mid-line syntactic breaks in this Middle English passage are comparable to those in late Old English and early Middle English poetry.[19] This finding spawned discoveries of verse-specific metrical constraints that, in turn, provided further support for the partitioning of the long line into a- and b-verses.

When metrists realized that the half-line organization found in Old English alliterative poetry occurs also in Middle English alliterative verse, they began to compare the meters of the older and newer traditions at the level of the half-line. What they found is that two-beat verses are extremely common in Middle English alliterative verse and that three-beat verses, such as this one, occur occasionally:

[19] In spite of the syntactic and metrical breaks, editions still run a- and b-verses together, without visual cues for mid-line caesuras. See, for example, *The Poems of the Pearl Manuscript: Pearl, Cleanness, Patience, Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, ed. by Malcolm Andrew and Ronald Waldron, 5th edn, Exeter Medieval English Texts and Studies (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 2007); *The Knightly Tale of Golagros and Gawane*, ed. by Ralph Hanna, III, Scottish Text Society, 5th series, 7 (Woodbridge, UK: Scottish Text Society, 2008); and Langland, *Piers*, ed. by Pearsall.

x / x / x x / x

Þe warm wynde of þe weste wertes he swyþeȝ

'The warm wind of the West scorches [the] plants'

P.478

Recognition of the Middle English half-line organization has led to the realization that Middle English and Old English alliterative poetry are similar in that there are usually two or three beats per verse. One should keep in mind that this similarity is only artificial.

There are also artificial similarities between poems like the eighth-century Old English *Beowulf* and the fourteenth-century Middle English *Patience* in distributions of metrically unstressed syllables. These separate meters seem most alike at the end of the line, where in Middle English exactly one metrically unstressed syllable is obligatory and where in Old English one or zero metrically unstressed syllables occur. Earlier in the line, constraints on dips in the two traditions are quite different from each other and the occasional apparent similarity is coincidental.[20]

Proving that the *Gawain*-poet's metrical patterns are different from those found in Old English but still regular requires a reliable method for determining verses' metrical patterns. This determination requires an understanding of the terms 'linguistic accent', 'metrical stress', and 'beat'. The more familiar poetry of Chaucer can serve as a framework

[20] See John Collins Pope, *The Rhythm of Beowulf: An Interpretation of the Normal and Hypermetric Verse-Forms in Old English Poetry*, rev. edn (New Haven, Connecticut, and London: Yale University Press, 1966), 'Appendix', pp. 231-409, for a catalogue of the multitude of acceptable metrical patterns in *Beowulf*, a large majority of which are unacceptable in any Middle English alliterative verse.

for learning these terms; in turn, the terms can provide a clearer picture of how to determine a Middle English alliterative verse's metrical pattern.

A discussion of syllable prominence in poetry can begin with an explanation of accentuation in everyday language. This study follows Anthony Fox in assuming two levels of accentuation in normal English speech.[21] Level I accent may be thought of as the accent on words' primarily accented syllables and so here will be called 'word accent'.[22] The first syllable of *ever* bears word accent. It may come as a surprise to some people that even though native English speakers produce and perceive syllable prominence with a high degree of consistency, the question of exactly how speakers produce an accented syllable is unsettled. Increased loudness, higher frequencies (experienced by listeners as 'pitch'), and more careful enunciation all tend to correlate with which syllables listeners perceive as prominent, but prominence is not always determinable from these 'acoustic correlates'. In any case, however speakers produce linguistic prominence, it is a real part of the speech signal and it is something that listeners perceive.

Level II accent ('sentence accent') occurs on syllables that are prominent not only within their own words, but also within a particular uttered sentence. In a sentence, both syllables in *ever*, even the syllable with the word accent, might be less prominent than, for example, the primarily accented syllable of a nearby noun, as in *Did WILLiam ever TELL you he was GOing?* In this case, the first syllable of *ever* may retain word accent, but does

[21] Anthony T.C. Fox, *Prosodic Features and Prosodic Structure: The Phonology of Suprasegmentals*, Oxford Linguistics (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), pp. 144-49.
[22] See Fox, *Prosodic*, p. 145, for a discussion of this term.

not bear sentence accent. In contrast, the first syllable of *William* in the example bears both word and sentence accent.[23]

Linguistic accent is a prominence in normal speech, whereas a metrical stress, also called a beat, is a prominence in poetry. Whether metrical stress is properly a listener's perception of an individual prominence, a reader's production of a prominence, or a feature of the meter independent of listener or speaker is an important question, but one that lies beyond the scope of the present study. Consider this line, with its likely accented and unaccented syllables marked 'A' and 'U' (phonological categories) and metrically stressed and unstressed syllables marked '/' and 'x' (categories of literary prosody, also known as 'beats' and 'offbeats'):

U U A U U U (A) U A U

/ x / x / x / x / x

Whan that Aprill with his shoures soote

Chaucer, CT.'General Prologue'.1 (1386-1400)

In a hypothetical utterance of this line in normal speech, a speaker might accent (i.e., utter more prominently) the syllables *Ap-*, *shou-*, and *soo-*.[24] Due to the phonological malleability of speech, there are other possible assignments of linguistic accent. *Shou-* could be

[23] Syllables, rather than words, bear accent; however, the term 'accented word' serves as shorthand for 'word whose most prominent syllable bears both sentence accent and word accent'. Similarly, 'metrically stressed word' means 'word whose most prominent syllable bears metrical stress'.

[24] Spelling out individual syllables occasionally helps in clarifying scansions, so a note on where words break into syllables may be helpful. The question of exactly where to break English words into syllables is complex. Word origins, groupings of sounds in pronunciation, and current editorial conventions for hyphenation at line-breaks often give contradictory results. The present study attempts merely to use word divisions that seem to distract least from the immediately pertinent issues.

linguistically unaccented, for example; for this reason the syllable is marked with an 'A' in parentheses. In poetry, though, the reader finds that the line lends itself to a reading with five, instead of just three prominences. These poetic prominences are 'metrical stresses', also called 'beats'. The ease with which a reader can utter syllables like *Whan* and *with* prominently in verse conceals an important fact: It would be quite unusual to utter these syllables prominently in everyday speech. Once an utterance of the verse is complete, though, it actually can be difficult to convince speakers that they have set aside rules of everyday speech.

It is important to understand in what sense a syllable with no accent in normal speech could be prominent in poetry. In poetry, it is not the actual sound of a syllable—its acoustic reality—that determines prominence, though in performance metrically stressed syllables are often pronounced more prominently. Instead, metrical prominence is a combination of factors, one of which is the position of a syllable relative to the metrical template. This is to say that even without any measurable acoustic differentiation from metrically unstressed syllables, a syllable can be metrically stressed. Some syllables admit of a reader's tapping out beats more readily than other syllables admit of it.

Neural evidence seems to leave open the possibility that words with minimal claim to linguistic accent but placed in metrically stressed positions of evenly alternating poetic meter are not just performable as prominent but felt as prominent. Cognitive scientists are studying brain response to patterns of sound. 'Responses' to rhythmic auditory stimuli can occur even when individual tones in a sequence are omitted. When subjects are presented with alternating loud and soft tones, occasional omission of the loud tones has little effect

on some of the neural readings associated with the occurrence of loud tones. Similarly, neural readings for soft tones can occur even when individual soft tones are occasionally omitted from the sound sequence.[25]

The possibility for metrical stress in the absence of linguistic accent in Chaucer's poetry can help one to understand the phenomenon of metrical stress in Middle English alliterative verse. As in Chaucer's poetry, metrical stress in poems like *Cleanness* falls on the syllables that invite readers to tap their feet. Similarly, the definition given above for linguistic accent applies equally well in Middle English: Linguistic accentuation is prominence in everyday speech. The relation between metrical stress and linguistic accentuation in Middle English alliterative verse is different from their relation in Chaucer's poetry, though. In the simplest terms, linguistic accent in speech translates directly to metrical stress in Middle English alliterative verse much more reliably than it does in Chaucer's verse. By the same token, linguistically unaccented syllables become metrically unstressed syllables in Middle English alliterative verse much more reliably than in Chaucer's poetry.

In Chaucer's poetry the matching of linguistic accent to metrical stress is loose while there is little variability in the set of allowable patterns of metrical stresses. The reverse is true in Old English poetry and Middle English alliterative verse. Bliss' explanation of OE meter is helpful:

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[25] See Joel Stephen Snyder and Edward Wilson Large, 'Gamma-Band Activity Reflects the Metric Structure of Rhythmic Tone Sequences', *Cognitive Brain Research,* 24 (2005), pp. 117-26. Figures 1C and 1D, showing omission of stimuli next to persistence of percept, are especially impressive.

> What is characteristic of Old English verse is that the divergences from the norm are to be found, not in the more or less exact accommodation of the speech-material to the metrical pattern, but in the variation of the metrical pattern itself.[26]

In Old English and Middle English alliterative poetry, matching of accent to metrical stress is rigid while there is great variety in the set of allowable patterns of metrically stressed and unstressed syllables. The correspondence in Middle English alliterative verse between linguistic accentuation and metrical stress is so great that one may begin to question the usefulness of distinguishing the terms 'linguistic accentuation' and 'metrical stress' from each other. The distinction will prove useful, though, in discussions of metrical promotion later in this chapter and of metrical demotion in Chapter Two.

A useful typological distinction originally proposed by Terry V. F. Brogan can clarify the different possibilities in verse for correspondence of linguistic accent to metrical stress and the uniformity/variability of patterns of metrical stress: Old English poetry and Middle English alliterative verse are predominately 'inductive meters', and the iambic pentameter of authors from Chaucer to the present is predominately a 'deductive meter'. Verse in inductive meter gets its pattern of beats directly from syllables typically accented in normal speech. Verse in deductive meter gets its pattern of beats partially from such accented syllables and partially from the artifice known as its template. Brogan explains,

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[26] A. J. Bliss, 'The Appreciation of Old English Metre', in *English and Medieval Studies: Presented to J.R.R. Tolkien on the Occasion of his Seventieth Birthday*, ed. by Norman Davis and C. L. Wrenn (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1962), chap. 3, pp. 27-40 (29-30).

> OE meter is inductive, ModE meter deductive: OE meter builds itself up from variegated accretion of formulaic metrical units, whereas ModE meter establishes a single archetype, down from which or within which it will permit some moderate flex.[27]

Readers of poetry with an inductive meter discover the pattern of beats and offbeats for a particular line only after reading the line.

This inductive/deductive system of classification is helpful in accounting for several phenomena in Middle English alliterative verse, especially when one conceives of the proposed distinction as gradient rather than absolute. Meters can be both more or less inductive and deductive, sometimes mixing features of both frameworks. Classical Old English verse, for example, mixes a reliance on syllable count with fairly strict alignment of linguistic accent and metrical stress. In calling this poetry 'accentual meter', traditional metrists actually mistakenly suggest that it is strictly inductive. The Five Types (A, B, C, D, and E) outlined by Eduard Sievers for classifying individual verses participate in this erroneous characterization; they misleadingly suggest an exclusively inductive meter that requires the poet to match linguistic accents to a small set of metrical patterns.[28] What is more plausible is that the types are the consequence of a more basic requirement, namely a syllable-counting meter. Although the 'grammatical hierarchy' (a model that aids in inference of linguistic accent and assignment of metrical stress) lies at the heart of the meter, poets observed a template of four metrical positions. There is some flexibility in the

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[27] Terry Vance F. Brogan, 'What to Make of a Diminished Thing: Germanic', (unpublished manuscript, University of Texas at Austin, 1981), p. 15. Underlines appear in the original.
[28] Eduard Sievers, 'Zur Rhythmik des Germanischen Alliterationsverses', *Beiträge zur Geschichte der Deutschen Sprache und Literatur,* 10 (1885), pp. 209-314, 451-545.

realization of the first two positions, especially in what traditional metrists think of as Types A, B, and C (/x/x, x/x/, and x//x); there is something closer to a requirement of one syllable per position in the third and fourth positions of the Old English verse. Old English meter serves as an example of how inductive and deductive meters mix in English poetry.

Entertaining inductive/deductive metrical mixture as a model for explaining Middle English alliterative verse proves fruitful. In particular, the great variety of acceptable patterns of metrically stressed and unstressed syllables in the a-verse suggests a predominately inductive meter in the first half of the long line. In contrast, the short list of acceptable patterns in the b-verse suggests an element of deductive meter in the second half of the long line and opens the door to an explanation of phenomena there using the vast body of work that has been done on other deductive meters.

Brogan's distinction between deductive and inductive meters helps to explain exactly how Middle English alliterative lines are scanned. The patterns of prominence depend first of all on Middle English linguistic accent, which today's metrists use word classes and the notion of a grammatical hierarchy to infer. An example from the corpus can illustrate the connection between word class, Middle English linguistic accent, and metrical stress in Middle English alliterative verse. Determining the rhythm of the following verse begins with the assumption that the nouns *rasse* 'ridge' and *rok* 'rock' would have been linguistically accented in normal Middle English speech. (A reading in MdnE that leaves them unaccented or that accents the function words *on*, *a*, and *of* would imply the unlikely situation in which Middle English speakers routinely gave function words linguistic

prominence.) The verse thus has the following pattern of linguistically accented and unaccented syllables:

U U A U U AU

On a **r**asse of a **r**ok hit **r**est at þe laste

'On a ridge of a rock it rested at last'

C.446

The pattern of metrical stresses that the above pattern of linguistic prominences implies is xx/xx/x. The meter of the a-verse allows this pattern.

The meter of the a-verse in fact allows for scores of patterns. Readers often attribute the large number of acceptable patterns of poetic prominence in Middle English alliterative verse to a presumed lack of rigorous constraint; meanwhile, they might misunderstand the rigor of Chaucer's meter by disregarding the large number of linguistic-accent–to–metrical-stress mismatches there. In this line from *The Canterbury Tales*, no fewer than two linguistically unaccented syllables serve as metrically stressed syllables:

U A U U U U U A U A

x / x / x / x / x /

A marchant <u>was</u> ther <u>with</u> a forked berd

Chaucer, CT.'General Prologue'.270 (1386-1400)

In addition to these mismatches, there are other possibilities in iambic pentameter for departure from 'rigorous constraint'. John Keats stacks the following line with no fewer than seven potential linguistically accented syllables, and yet the verse still has only five beats:

A A U A A A U A U A

x / x / x / x / x /

Toe crush'd with heel ill-natured fighting breeds

Keats, 'The Jealousies', l. 772 (prob. 1819)[29]

Iambic pentameter constitutes rigorous constraint but tolerates linguistic-accent–to–metrical-stress mismatches. Analogously, Middle English alliterative meter also involves strict syllable-counting, even if that strictness is not immediately recognizable to MdnE readers. Showing how the large number of acceptable patterns in Middle English alliterative verse can be compatible with a high degree of constraint of the pattern of metrically stressed and unstressed syllables will be part of the work of this dissertation.

The preceding discussion of the connection between linguistic accent and metrical stress in Middle English alliterative verse provides a context for understanding why metrists disagree about the number of metrical stresses that the a-verse can have. Metrists arrive at different beat-counts because of the precise way that they define the inductive Middle English alliterative meter. Although there is wide agreement that metrical stress mostly aligns with linguistic accent, there is disagreement over which words were linguistically accented in the first place. There is also disagreement over how exact the alignment between linguistic accent and metrical stress is. Yakovlev assumes that both the grammatical hierarchy (the ranking of parts of speech by their likelihood of bearing linguistic accent) and alliteration determine metrical stress.[30] For example, he gives the following verse from

[29] Keats John Keats, *Complete Poems*, ed. by Jack Stillinger (Cambridge, Massachusetts, and London, England: Belknap Press, 1982), p. 407.
[30] Yakovlev, *Development*, p. 177.

Sir Gawain and the Green Knight three beats, one for the adjective (*huge*), one for the noun (*heȝt*), one for the alliterating adverb (*eft*), and none for the non-alliterating adverb (*ful*):

> Ande **e**ft a ful **h**uge **h**eȝt hit **h**aled vpon lofte[31]
>
> 'and then it extended on high a very great height'
>
> SGGK.788

Yakovlev gives several guidelines for identifying metrically stressed syllables. First, following Duggan, he assumes that alliteration signals metrical stress.[32] The precise nature of this connection is not clear. It may be that alliteration identifies linguistically accented syllables, which then get metrical stress according to the principle of the grammatical hierarchy. It may instead be that alliteration indicates nothing about Middle English linguistic accent but leads to metrical stress through some kind of metrical promotion—the treatment of linguistically unaccented syllables as metrically stressed. For Yakovlev, all alliterating open-class words are metrically stressed. All non-alliterating closed-class words are metrically unstressed. Yakovlev also treats non-alliterating open-class words as metrically stressed, but occasionally makes exceptions, as he does by leaving *Sir* metrically unstressed in SGGK.876 *Watz grayþed for Sir Gawan grayþely with cloþez* 'Was prepared promptly for

[31] By convention, vowels and *h* alliterate with each other. Yakovlev, *Development*, p. 168, does not scan the verse, but implies the locations of the three beats by referring to *ful* as part of a dip and the whole verse as a three-beat example.

[32] See Yakovlev, *Development*, p. 169 n. 97; Yakovlev, 'Prosodic' (p. 230); and Hoyt N. Duggan, 'Stress Assignment in Middle English Alliterative Poetry', *Journal of English and Germanic Philology,* 89 (1990), pp. 309-29. The term 'stress' in the title of Duggan's article corresponds to this dissertation's term 'metrical stress'.

Sir Gawain with fabrics'.[33] Phrasal verbs' particles (e.g., *vp* 'up' in C.2a *and rekken vp alle þe resoun3 þat ho by ri3t aske3* 'and count up all the narratives that she requires by right') are metrically stressed if 'separated from the verb root by at least one syllable'.[34] Finally, postpositions (words playing the semantic and syntactic roles of prepositions but occurring after their objects) 'more than one [metrically] unstressed syllable away from the final lift' and compounds' final, rather than initial, words are treated by Yakovlev as metrically stressed.[35]

Other scholars have other methods for determining metrically stressed syllables. In showing the distinct metrical status of adverbs ending in *-ly*, for example, Duggan identifies word origin and morphology as indicators of whether syllables bear metrical stress.[36] Noriko Inoue and Myra Stokes assert that verse-final words are usually metrically stressed:

> The a-verse must have a caesural [metrical] stress, which always falls on the verse-final lexical item whether it is of open or closed class, unless the verse-final lexical item is so closely syntactically linked to the preceding one as to form a continuant of it equivalent to the unstressed syllables succeeding the stressed (root) syllable of a word.[37]

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[33] Yakovlev, *Development*, pp. 168 n. 93, 172.
[34] Yakovlev, *Development*, p. 168 n. 93.
[35] Yakovlev, *Development*, pp. 169 n. 98, 170.
[36] Hoyt N. Duggan, 'The Role and Distribution of *-ly* Adverbs in Middle English Alliterative Verse', in *Loyal Letters: Studies on Mediaeval Alliterative Poetry and Prose*, ed. by L. A. J. R. Houwen and A. A. MacDonald, Mediaevalia Groningana, 15 (Groningen: Egbert Forsten, 1994), pp. 131-54.
[37] Inoue and Stokes, 'Caesura', p. 4 n. (a). Since the closing phrase of the passage seems to refer to word accent in normal speech (e.g., 'root' suggests that the authors had morphophonology in mind), it would read slightly differently with the present study's

They further assert, 'Even words relatively unimportant semantically appear to bear [metrical] stress in this caesural position'.[38] They assume that syntactic inversion, especially of prepositions and their objects, can cause a closed word-class item at the end of the a-verse to get a beat.[39] Inoue and Stokes present a number of exceptions to these guidelines. They claim that a pronominal vocative and an auxiliary following a main verb do not bear metrical stress at the caesura.[40]

Inoue and Stokes' a-verse assumption is questionable. It is true that there is indirect support from the b-verse meter for the assumption of verse-final metrical stress; after all, the second to last syllable in the b-verse, which is usually a part of the final word of the verse, always gets a beat. Research on linguistic accent, though, does not support the assumption that verse-final words automatically get beats. Carlos Gussenhoven gives the following examples of sentences lacking 'right-peripheral' prominence. The *A*'s indicate sentence accent.

A

I have some books to read

A

There's a fly in my soup

---

terminology: 'the linguistically unaccented syllables succeeding the linguistically accented (root) syllable of a word'.

[38] Inoue and Stokes, 'Caesura', 3.

[39] Inoue and Stokes, 'Caesura', 6.

[40] Inoue and Stokes, 'Caesura', p. 4 n. (a).

A

Our dog died[41]

The Pitch Accent View (PAV) of sentential prominence that Gussenhoven summarizes offers plausible explanations for many sentences like these. Gussenhoven additionally lists six types of 'right-peripheral elements' that are unaccented in English: time-space markers (e.g., *here*), cohesion markers (*actually*), hearer-appeal markers (*don't you think*), textual markers (*I think*), approximatives (*kind of thing*), and epithets. In addition to providing evidence against default phrase-final accent, PAV promises to answer many more questions about linguistic accent.[42] The point is that to the extent that phonology has provided answers to the question of linguistic accent, it has cast doubt on phrase-final accent in Modern and historical English and therefore has challenged Inoue and Stokes' assumption of default verse-final metrical stress.[43]

Other evidence against default treatment of verse-final words as metrically stressed comes from Inoue and Stokes themselves. They properly refrain from metrically stressing verse-final words in some b-verses.[44] In verses like the following, they properly assign metrical stress to the penultimate word *wyth*:

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[41] Carlos Gussenhoven, 'Sentential Prominence in English', in *The Blackwell Companion to Phonology*, ed. by Marc van Oostendorp, Colin J. Ewen, Elizabeth V. Hume, and Karen Rice (Malden, Massachusetts: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011), chap. 116, pp. 2779-806 (2793-94).
[42] Gussenhoven, 'Sentential', 2800-01.
[43] Gussenhoven, 'Sentential', 2796-97.
[44] See Inoue and Stokes, 'Caesura', 8, and Noriko Inoue, *The A-Verse of the Alliterative Long Line and the Metre of Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* (unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Bristol, 2002), 63.

x x / / x

For alle þe golde vpon grounde I nolde go wyth þe

'For all the gold on earth I would not go with you'

SGGK.2150

Among the many questions, therefore, that arise from an assumption of metrical stress on the last word of the a-verse is why Inoue and Stokes, the main proponents of a-verse-final metrical stress, themselves abandon the rule in the b-verse.

Through their scansions and lists of rules, Inoue and Stokes imply other considerations that go into determining the positions of metrical stress. In analyzing the following two a-verses, they imply that alliteration and verse position, in addition to part of speech, play roles in attracting metrical stress:

Lepe lyȝtly me to [and lach þis weppen]

'Let [him] leap quickly toward me [and seize this weapon]'

SGGK.292

Lyȝtly lepez he hym to [and laȝt at his honde]

'He nimbly leaps toward him [and clutched at his hand]'

SGGK.328

They write, 'These a-verses have three potential ictus positions: two open-class words, which are accompanied by alliteration, and the preposition *to*, upon which the inversion would bestow phrasal stress.'[45]

[45] Inoue and Stokes, 'Caesura', p. 6.

All of these detailed explanations of a supposed complex link between linguistic accent, alliteration, morphology, syntax, and verse position neglect Middle English alliterative verse's indisputable status as an inductive meter. As George Kane has asserted regarding alliteration:

> The recurrence in a certain proximity of the same initial phoneme or conventionally associated initial phoneme sets up a pattern of a different character from the rhythmic pattern of the line, one established in the first instance by auditory experience of the recurrence, without necessary relation to the variations of tone, pitch and volume by which the rhythmic pattern is sensed.[46]

Consistent with Kane's distinction between the alliterative and 'rhythmic pattern' of the long line, the present study explores the viability of a more disciplined regard for the grammatical hierarchy over the many other guidelines that metrists have proposed for assigning metrical stress in Middle English alliterative verse.

The only way that verse position can influence metrical status is if a rigid metrical template governs the verse position. There is ample evidence and a growing consensus that the end of the b-verse is governed by a rigid template. That template explains why Inoue and Stokes' contention of a rule of verse-final metrical stress is largely valid in the b-verse. In the other half of the long line, though, there is little evidence that the end of the a-verse is so governed. Inoue and Stokes' attempt to establish the presence of a template at the pre-caesural position (i.e., at the end of the a-verse) with evidence from phonology is flawed

[46] George Kane, 'Music "Neither Unpleasant nor Monotonous"', in *Medieval Studies for J. A. W. Bennett*, ed. by P. L. Heyworth (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1981), pp. 43-63 (47-8).

because not even phonology necessarily favors the kinds of prominence patterns that Inoue and Stokes assume.

Identifying beats in the b-verse is different from the heavily inductive process in the a-verse. The metrical status of a word in the b-verse is not purely a question of syntax, morphology, alliteration, or even just linguistic accent. To be sure, as a product of the tools of the English language, the b-verse meter will depend indirectly on all of these factors. Shared knowledge of such basic aspects of language makes interaction between poet and reader possible. It also gives the reader rhythmic guidance at the outset of the poem. Ultimately, though, the reader's consistent drawing on that knowledge leads to the perception of a pattern of prominences that is a feature of the b-verse rather than a feature of the language. The patterns of beats early in the poem start to have an influence of their own. Consider this example:

x x x / / x

I **k**euered me a **c**umfort þat now is **c**a3t fro me

'I obtained for myself one consolation that now is taken from me'

P.485

In P.485b, *me* may be eligible for linguistic accent in a performance of the poem and might even qualify for linguistic accent if the line occurred in normal speech rather than in poetry; even so, the meter is so firm at this part of the long line that it will trump language rules and coerce the word out of prominence. In such instances, the template holds more sway than the rules of normal speech.

This situation can arise in the b-verse because word accent and the grammatical hierarchy almost always dictate the metrical pattern /x at line-end. The coercion that this repeated pattern creates is a rare phenomenon in Middle English alliterative verse; recall that Middle English alliterative verse's inductive meter calls for a close correspondence between inferred linguistic accent and metrical stress. The situation here, though, at the end of the b-verse, is like the situation throughout an iambic pentameter line. It is common in deductive meters like iambic pentameter for meter to trump phonology, but uncharacteristic of inductive meters like Middle English alliterative verse's. Recognition of a coercive, deductive metrical element at the end of the long line means that rather than thoroughly inductive, Middle English alliterative meter is primarily inductive with deductive elements.

The metrical coercion of *me* out of prominence in the example above is a rare Middle English alliterative example of something that happens in Chaucerian verse often. Because of the overwhelmingly deductive nature of Chaucer's meter, such coercion is common there. The reason that coercion can occur at the end of P.485 is that the last two syllables of long lines in *Patience* so regularly follow the pattern /x that the meter of that portion of long lines is effectively deductive rather than inductive. While most of the long line allows for variety in patterns of beats and offbeats, there is a rigid requirement at the end of it for the /x pattern.

Inoue and Stokes' assumption of metrical stress at the end of the a-verse is dubious, but they are on firm ground when they use parts of speech to approach the question of how

to identify metrically stressed syllables. In a discussion of what makes an a-verse 'crowded', Inoue writes that such a verse has:

> three (or more) possible ictus positions. These three positions are occupied by three or more open-class words, or by two open-class words and one closed-class word requiring stress at the pre-caesural position.[47]

Inoue's definition is similar to many scholars' convention of counting nouns, adjectives, participles, and infinitives as metrically stressed; counting verbs and adverbs as metrically stressed sometimes; and counting the rest of the parts of speech as metrically unstressed. The implication is that these were the words that were linguistically accented in Middle English.

Relying more consistently on the grammatical hierarchy as an indicator of linguistic accent and metrical stress helps to maintain the integrity of the system of scansion. Assuming that Middle English grammatical word classes approximate those in MdnE allows us to build a model of Middle English accentuation. One popular comprehensive grammar gives the following account of the MdnE open word-classes and closed word-classes:

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[47] Inoue, *A-Verse*, p. 74, item 2. Her use of the term 'stress' corresponds to this dissertation's term 'metrical stress'. See Joan Turville-Petre, 'The Metre of Sir Gawain and the Green Knight', *English Studies,* 57 (1976), pp. 310-28 (320), for the apparent first use of the term 'crowded' in this way. The term 'extended' has been used for the same concept, but this term is problematic. First, Old English metrists use 'extended' for verses that do not exactly correspond to Middle English alliterative verse's crowded verses (although there are superficial resemblances). Second, since the word 'extended' can mean simply 'stretched', readers might misconstrue it as a reference to the total number of syllables in a verse rather than as an indication of the total number of potential metrical stresses. Third, the present study, especially Chapter Four, uses 'extended' for a quite different purpose, namely to designate stretches of sequential iambs that are infelicitously long.

Tier I: Open Word-Classes: noun, adjective, full verb (such as *WIGGLE* and *BLURT*), adverb with adjectival base[48]

Tier II: Closed Word-Classes: preposition, pronoun, determiner (including articles *a*/*an* and *the*; demonstratives *this*, *that*, *these*, *those*; and pronominal adjective), conjunction, modal verb (such as *MAY*, *WILL*, and *COULD*), primary verb (only *BE*, *HAVE*, and *DO*), adverb without adjectival base

Tier III: Other: numeral (cardinal and ordinal), interjection, negative particle *not*, infinitive marker *to*.[49]

This classification is syntactic, but it also serves as an index of accentual status.

For Inoue and Stokes, this classification translates to the following guidelines for metrical status:

Tier I: Open word-classes:	Possibly metrically stressed
Tier II: Closed word-classes:	Metrically unstressed (unless at the end of the verse)
Tier III: Other:	[Unspecified][50]

[48] A word in all capital letters indicates the set of words comprising base forms and inflected forms.

[49] Randolph Quirk, Sidney Greenbaum, Geoffrey Leech, and Jan Svartvik, *A Comprehensive Grammar of the English Language* (Harlow, England: Longman, 1985), pp. 67 and 73. These word classifications are formal rather than functional. 'A formal classification takes account of how a unit is composed of smaller units or components, including, in the case of words, stems and affixes' (p. 49). In discussing the three classes of verbs distinguished by form, Quirk *et al.* also indicate the potential functions of the words: 'Modal verbs (*may*, *will*, *could*, etc) always function as auxiliaries; full verbs (*give*, *work*, *try*, etc) always function as main verbs; and primary verbs (the three most important verbs in the language: *be*, *have*, and *do*) can function either as auxiliaries or as main verbs' (p. 64).

This study largely adopts the grammatical hierarchy presented in Cable's *English Alliterative Tradition*.[51] Some changes should be made on each of the three levels. First, in order to make the status of numerals clear, this word class should appear in Tier I. Second, primary verb infinitives (*BE*, *DO*, *HAVE*) , primary verb participles (*BEEN*, *DONE*, *HAD*), pronominal adjectives, full verb imperatives, and words ending in *-self* belong in Tier II. Finally, interjections, primary verb imperatives, and interrogative adjectives belong in Tier III. In the case of a compound word, individual elements of the compound are evaluated on their own. A word composed of two nouns, therefore, gets two metrical stresses. There is much overlap between approximation of metrical stress in this new model and in Inoue and Stokes' model. The new model goes into further detail; thus, it responds to Duggan's call for a 'rule that assigns stress in an ordered and non-arbitrary fashion'.[52] It also provides a foundation for speculation on the separate roles of Middle English linguistic accentuation, poetic alliteration, and metrical constraints in determining syllables' metrical status.

Assumption of metrical stress on words in Tier I of this hierarchy goes a long way toward producing plausible readings of verses in the corpus. Here are some examples:

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[50] Inoue, *A-Verse*, p. 116, also following Quirk *et al.*, *Comprehensive*, treats interjections as metrically stressed.
[51] Cable, *English*, p. 80.
[52] Hoyt N. Duggan, 'The Authenticity of the Z text of *Piers Plowman*: Further Notes on Metrical Evidence', *Medium Aevum,* 16 (1987), pp. 24-45 (27).

Noun (Tier I):

x x / x x /

And for my hyȝeȝ hem boȝt to bowe haf I mester

'And bought them for my harnesses. I have [a] duty to go'

C.67

Adjective (Tier I):

x / x x / x

Ful redy and ful ryȝtwys and rweled hym fayre

'Very able and very righteous and [he] maintained himself well'

C.294

Full Verb (Infinitive) (Tier I):

x / x x x /

And quelle alle þat is quik with quauende flodeȝ

'And kill all that is alive with throbbing floods'

C.324

Full Verb (Past Participle) (Tier I):

x x / x x / x

For þou in reysoun hatȝ rengned and ryȝtwys ben euer

'Because you have reigned with reason and have always been righteous'

C.328

Full Verb (Present Participle) (Tier I):

x x / x x x /x

And ay **g**lydande wyth his **G**od his **g**race wat3 þe more

'And, always living with his God, his grace was the greater'

C.296

In the above verses, the simple rule that Tier I words get beats causes no problem. Problems arise in many a-verses, though, where such a rule leaves many verses with clearly insufficient numbers of metrical stresses. The following verses have no Tier I words:

* x x x x x x x x x

Me **m**yne3 on one a**m**onge oþer as **M**aþew recorde3

'[This] reminds me of one among others such as Matthew mentions'

C.25

*x x x x x x x x

Oþer ani **o**n of **a**lle þyse **h**e schulde be **h**alden **v**tter

'Or any one of all these he would be thrown outside'

C.42

* x x x x x x

he **s**e3 no3t bot hym**s**elf how **s**emly he were

'He saw nothing but himself how fair he was'

C.209

These examples show the types of problems that arise from assuming metrical stress on only Tier I words. Adding consideration of alliteration helps fill the gap between linguistic accentuation and metrical stress.

This study investigates the hypothesis that the following guidelines are the most important for determining metrical stress in Middle English alliterative verse: the grammatical hierarchy, a normative count of two or three beats per verse, correspondence of metrical stress to alliteration, and, in the b-verse, the metrical template. After using the grammatical hierarchy as an approximation of sentence accent, one must consider whether to promote certain words. Metrists tend to agree on treating alliterating full finite verbs and adverbs (both of which are Tier II words in the adopted grammatical hierarchy) as metrically stressed. Here are a couple of examples:

Alliterating Full Verb (Finite) (Tier II):

x / x / x x x x / x

How **M**athew melede þat his **m**ayster his **m**eyny con teche

'How Matthew told what his Master did teach his followers'

P.10

/ x x x / x / x

Gederen to þe **g**yde-ropes þe **g**rete cloþ falles

'[And] pull at the guy ropes the great cloth unfurls'

P.105

/ x x / x x / x

Haþeles **hy**ȝ**ed** **i**n **h**aste with **o**res ful longe

'Men strove with speed with very long oars'

P.217

But many verses have no alliterating finite verbs or alliterating adverbs and appear to come up short on metrically stressed syllables. As it happens, many of these verses have non-alliterating Tier II words (finite full verbs or adverbs) or alliterating Tier III words.

The study thus also assumes the occasional promotion of non-alliterating adverbs, verbs, and pronominal adjectives and the rare promotion of alliterating function words. Most of these promotions are motivated by either excessively long sequences of metrically unstressed syllables or by the need for the metrical differentiation of the two half-lines (the mutual exclusivity of a-verse and b-verse metrical patterns). The non-alliterating adverb *also* gets a beat in the following verse:

x x x / x / x

Anoþer **n**ayed also and **n**urned þis cawse

'Another refused also and gave this reason'

C.65

Note that as a b-verse pattern, the pattern xxx/x/x in C.65a at first seems unmetrical. Yakovlev's constraint against having full vowel syllables like *-so* at the end of the b-verse, though, salvages this verse as metrical. Another possibility is final-syllable metrical stress on *also*, as occurs frequently in Chaucer (e.g., CT.'General Prologue'.285 *A Clerk ther was of Oxenford also*). In C.42a below, the alliterating pronoun *on* 'one', an item from a Tier III

word class, gets a beat in order to break up a group of five consecutive metrically unstressed syllables. The Tier III alliterating indefinite pronoun *Summe* 'some' in C.388a provides the verse's second beat.

x x x / x / x x

Oþer **a**ni **o**n **o**f **a**lle þyse **h**e schulde be **h**alden **v**tter

'Or any one of all these he would be thrown outside'

C.42

/ x / x x x

Summe **s**wymmed þeron þat **s**aue hem**s**elf trawed

'Some who hoped to save themselves swam in it.'

C.388[53]

Except where otherwise noted, all scansions in the study observe these guidelines; thus, the assumptions underlie the 'Rhythmic Consistency Theory' presented in Chapters Three and Four. Chapter Five introduces and justifies systematic departures from these guidelines. For the comparison of theories in Chapter Three, Inoue and Stokes' guidelines for 'possible ictus positions' are used with Inoue's Spacing Rule.

To these assumptions about metrical stress must be added a number of other assumptions. Metrists typically fix some floating variables in order to protect against biased, inconsistent invocation of possibly applicable metrical rules. In their volume on these issues, Putter, Jefferson, and Stokes include the following items in their list of key issues in Middle English alliterative metrics: the status of final *-e*; the number of beats in the long

[53] The present study's Chapter Five suggests a solution for the awkward three-syllable dip at the end of C.388a.

line; the requirement that the b-verse have exactly one multisyllabic dip; the metrical structure of the a-verse; and whether the last syllable of the long line can be a metrically stressed syllable.[54] Single verses often require the metrist to take positions on several of these issues. Consider C.52b:

* x / x / / x [Initial scansion]

x / x x / x [Final scansion]

Þat **m**ade þe **m**ukel **m**angerye to **m**arie his here dere

'Who arranged the great banquet to marry his beloved heir'

C.52

The scansion reflects the assumption that the metrical significance of final *-e* depends not on whether the letter appears in manuscripts and edited texts, but whether there is evidence that the final *-e* was historically sounded. Putter, Jefferson, and Stokes and, separately, Yakovlev have provided convincing evidence of the presence of final *-e* where it was present in historical inflections.[55] In the present study, 'historical final *-e*' includes a final *-e* at the end of words that would have taken the dative case. Since *here* 'heir' comes from the OF word *heir*, which has no final *-e*, the spelled *-e* does not count in the meter. The final *-e* in *dere* 'beloved', on the other hand, counts in the meter because this adjective comes from the OE *dēore*, which has a final *-e*. The final scansion of C.52b also reflects the assumption that the b-verse has two beats and exactly one multisyllabic dip. These

[54] In addition to these five issues, Putter, Jefferson, and Stokes, *Studies*, p. 2, list alliterative patterning, a topic that the present study will engage only insofar as it influences patterns of beats and offbeats.

[55] See Putter, Jefferson, and Stokes, *Studies*, especially chap. 2, and Yakovlev, *Development*, also chap. 2.

features of the b-verse are so ubiquitous that when a normally metrically stressed word, like the noun *here*, seems to intercede, it is treated as a metrically unstressed syllable.

In C.450b, assumptions connected to Putter, Jefferson, and Stokes' fourth and fifth main issues come into play:

*	x / x x / x x	[Initial Scansion]
	x / x x / x	[Final Scansion]

ȝet fyned not þe flod ne fel to þe boþemeȝ

'The flood still did not cease nor did [it] sink to the foundations'

C.450

Since singular *boþem* is a two-syllable word, *boþemes* would seem to be trisyllabic. Generally, the present study proceeds conservatively in leaving all potential syllables intact and in treating them as significant in the meter. The initial scansion of C.450b thus gives a sequence of two metrically unstressed syllables at the end of the verse. Assumptions about the meter, though, and the amenability of *boþemes* to an alternative scansion motivate the adjustment shown. Since x/xx/xx conflicts both with the assumption that the b-verse cannot have an a-verse metrical pattern and with the assumption that the b-verse must end in exactly one metrically unstressed syllable, *boþemes* is rescanned. Syncope of the first *e* in this word gives x/xx/x, a standard b-verse pattern.

Cable agrees with Putter, Jefferson, and Stokes that the status of final *-e* and the number of beats in the long line are important pieces of a description of the meter. He also includes two other issues in a list of four 'overarching problems in Middle English

alliterative metrics': the role of part of speech in identifying metrical stress and the relation between the meters of the a- and b-verses.[56]

This dissertation assumes answers to four of the seven questions raised by Putter, Jefferson, and Stokes and by Cable: a status for final *-e*, to be elaborated later in the Introduction; a requirement that the b-verse have exactly one multisyllabic dip; a requirement that the long line end with exactly one metrically unstressed syllable; and a requirement that all metrical patterns allowed in the b-verse are disallowed in the a-verse. These assumptions help answer the three other important questions, those concerning the metrical structure of the a-verse; the number of beats in the long line; and the role of parts of speech in Middle English alliterative metrics.

Actual scansions will provide the best demonstration of how the main theoretical assumptions interact with each other, and in preparation for those scansions this section of the chapter explains the roles of elision, apocope, and syncope in the study's corpus. First, a statement of the rules of elision will be followed by a discussion of the merits of the rules. Elision occurs only and always in the environments where elision could occur in Chaucer's verse. Bernhard ten Brink identifies these environments in *The Language and Metre of Chaucer*:

[56] Cable, 'Progress', 243.

ENVIRONMENTS FOR ELISION

- Final weak [read 'reduced'] *-e* before:
    - initial vowel or
    - initial *h-* (whether of an historically English or Romance word, and whether the *h* is muted or aspirated)
- Final 'closed' [read 'full'] *-e* (e.g., *me*, *pitee*) before:
    - initial vowel only (not before *h-*)
- unaccented *-o* before:
    - initial vowel[57]

Ten Brink considers these environments necessary for elision rather than always sufficient for elision. In other words, in Chaucer's poetry these environments are prerequisites for elision, but they occasionally fail to trigger elision. For several reasons, though, these environments count as entirely sufficient for elision in the present study. First the multitude of floating variables in Middle English alliterative metrics makes it important to take advantage of every opportunity to inoculate against variable, undisciplined deployment of elision. Such deployment too often tips scansions far in the direction of metrists biased by particular theories. Adhering to one unbending standard for elision, even if it occasionally offends, enhances the integrity of the entire theory.

Evidence both from *Piers Plowman* and from the present corpus supports the treatment of the contexts described above as environments entirely sufficient for elision,

[57] This list is an extrapolation from Bernhard ten Brink, *Chaucers Sprache und Verskunst*, trans. by M. Bentinck Smith as *The Language and Metre of Chaucer*, 2nd edn (London: Macmillan, 1901), pp. 181-7.

rather than as mere minimum requirements. In a study that increases the number of metrical b-verses in 563 lines of *Piers* (excerpts of the Prologue and Passus VI) from 444 b-verses to 517 b-verses, Cole shows that 19 of the salvaged b-verses owe their legitimacy entirely to an assumption of elision in the environments that ten Brink describes.[58] For example, by reducing the number of multisyllabic dips in each verse from two to one, elision makes these b-verses metrical:

x x x / x / x

That **P**oul **p**recheth of hem I wol nat **p**reve it here

'What Paul preaches of them I don't dare repeat here'

Piers.Prol.38

x / x x / x

For in **l**ove and in **l**ettrure the e**l**eccion bi**l**ongeth

'For the election belongs to love and to learning'

Piers.Prol.110

The elision of *-e* in *preve* and *the* keeps these two long lines from having unmetrical second multisyllabic dips in their b-verses.

Elision similarly makes many verses in the present corpus metrical.[59] The least controversial scenarios, such as elision of weak *-e* before a vowel, need not be examined

[58] See Kristin Lynn Cole, 'Prosodists' (M.A. thesis, University of Texas at Austin, 2002), p. 8, for the statement of the adoption of ten Brink's rules and pp. 11, 27-9, 37-8 for the results. Some b-verses in addition to these 19 owe their metricality to elision and to at least one other assumption.

[59] P.434's b-verse is a rare exception. The meter needs syllabic *þe*, but the phonetic environment requires elision: *And **h**aldeȝ out on **e**st **h**alf of þe **h**yȝe place* 'And goes out to [the] east side in a high place'.

here, but two environments omitted by ten Brink warrant special attention. The environment 'word-final full *-e* before word-initial *h-*'[60] does not appear in the list of environments, and the present corpus supports its omission:

x / x x / x

I **m**ay not be so **m**alicious and **m**ylde <u>be</u> halden

'I can not be so stern and be considered merciful,

P.522

As ten Brink's list suggests, the environment 'word-final full *-a*, *-i*, *-o*, *-u*, and *-y* before a word-initial vowel or *h-*' also triggers no elision.[61] Consider these examples, whose metrically required multisyllabic dips depend on retention of the underlined syllables:

/ xx / x[62]

Þus þy **f**reke to **f**orfare **f**or<u>bi</u> alle oþer

'Thus to destroy your prophet, more than all the others'

P.483

[60] The quotation marks around descriptions of phonetic environments here and below are merely expedients for setting the descriptions apart from other text. The quotation marks in these cases do not indicate citation of another scholar.

[61] In Stephen A. Barney, 'A Revised Edition of the C Text', rev. of *William Langland: Piers Plowman; A New Annotated Edition of the C-Text*, by Derek Pearsall, *The Yearbook of Langland Studies,* 23 (2009), pp. 265-88 (282), the summary of Chaucer's elision does not quite match ten Brink's. Barney seems to allow for elision of all word-final vowels, even full word-final vowels, before word-initial vowels and *h-*. He refers to 'a familiar rule from Chaucer and others that final vowels before words with initial vowel or *h-* are elided'. The present study follows ten Brink's rather than Barney's model.

[62] Even if one assigns metrical stress to *alle*, instead of *for-*, and favors the scansion xx//x, *-bi* must retain syllabic status.

x / x x / x

My **w**od-bynde so **w**lonk þat **w**ered my heued

'My woodbine so splendid which protected my head'

P.486

The omission from ten Brink's list of 'word-final full *-a, -i, -o, -u,* and *-y* before a word-initial vowel or *h-*' garners futher support from the following verse, where elision would offend the b-verse requirement of exactly one multisyllabic dip:

/ x x / x

And þer he **s**wowed and **s**lept **s**adly al nyȝt[63]

'And there he swooned and slept soundly all night'

P.442

Such decisive verses, which occur throughout the corpus, vindicate both the adoption of ten Brink's guidelines for elision and the additional stipulation that elision in these phonetic environments is mandatory rather than optional.

In addition to elision, apocope and syncope must be considered. Apocope involves the loss of a weak vowel, and therefore a syllable, at the end of a word, even when there is no following vowel or *h-*. This study assumes operation of apocope only as a rare expedient to shorten sequences of metrically unstressed syllables when the meter requires. All of the

[63] See Yakovlev, *Development*, pp. 142-3; Cable, *English*, pp. 75-6, 78-9; Cable, 'Progress', p. 245; and Hoyt N. Duggan, 'Final -e and the Rhythmic Structure of the B-Verse in Middle English Alliterative Poetry', *Modern Philology,* 86 (1988), pp. 119-45 (138-9), for discussions of whether strings of orthographic letters like P.442b's *-ly al* actually constitute phonetic adjacency of word-final *-y* and word-initial *a-*. It may be that *-ly* stands for disyllabic /liə/. Such a reading would simply limit the usefulness of P.442b in an investigation of whether *-y* elides.

environments that ten Brink describes are assumed to be eligible for apocope.[64] G.V. Smithers makes the important point that 'final *-e* may (though it often does not) undergo apocope in almost any linguistic element, viz., nouns, adverbs, prepositions and conjunctions, infinitives, present plural indicative, present singular, plural subjunctive, past plural, imperative singular, past participle, and adjectives'.[65] The line-final metrical requirement in Middle English alliterative verse of exactly one beat followed by exactly one metrically unstressed syllable often makes apocope unappealing, so one should take special note of Smithers' caveat that final *-e* 'often does not' undergo apocope. The present study in fact rarely invokes apocope in any context; explanations accompany all occurrences. Syncope, as in the treatment of *ever* as the single syllable *e'er*, is similarly invoked only to alleviate excessively long sequences of metrically unstressed syllables (four such syllables or more).

This summary of the status of elision, apocope, and syncope facilitates a demonstration of the interaction of these metrical devices with the assumption of historical final *-e*. Consider these verses:

x / x / x x /

þe **f**olk ȝet haldande his **f**ete þe **f**ysch hym tyd hentes

'With the seamen still holding his feet the fish quickly seizes him'

P.251

[64] ten Brink, *Chaucers*, pp. 169-79.
[65] G. V. Smithers, 'The Scansion of *Havelok* and the Use of ME *–en* and *–e* in *Havelok* and by Chaucer', in *Middle English Studies: Presented to Norman Davis in Honour of his Seventieth Birthday*, ed. by Douglas Gray and E. G. Stanley (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1983), p. 200, item 4.

/ x x / x x x

Reken with **r**euerence þay **r**ychen his auter

'Promptly, with reverence they approach his altar'

C.10

These two scansions reflect the observance of historical final *-e*. *Fete* (< OE plural *fēt* 'feet') has no metrically significant final *-e*, but *reuerence* (< OF *reverence*) does. The historical final *-e* on verbal noun *haldande* elides due to the following *his*. In C.10a there at first seem to be possibilities for reduction of the four-syllable word *reuerence*, either to the three-syllable *reuerenc* (without final *-e*) through apocope or to the three-syllable *reu'rence* through syncope. These possibilities are ignored since the vowels eligible for apocope and syncope occur within a short sequence of metrically unstressed syllables. Many verse scansions become much clearer to readers when they keep in mind the assumption of historical final *-e* and the potential for elision, apocope, and syncope.

The analysis of one thousand long lines will address whether the assumptions about major and technical issues amount to plausible scansions that exhibit regularity across the corpus. The study will provide a picture of how the corpus looks when stances are taken on the metrical significance of historical final *-e*; basic b-verse metrical requirements; and the metrical relation of the a-verse to the b-verse. This latter issue, the assumption of metrical differentiation of the two half-lines, looms particularly large in the study. For example, part of what is at stake in Chapter Two's discussion of the b-verse is the legitimacy of this assumption. Chapter Three attempts to show that, in spite of this metrical differentiation, overall there are similar ratios of multisyllabic and short dips that keep the rhythm on

either side of the caesura similar. This principle of metrical differentiation is also in full accord with Chapter Four's investigation of other types of systematic metrical differentiation, primarily within individual verses rather than across the caesura. The results of this study, thus, will reflect assumptions about major issues like metrical differentiation as well as assumptions about the connections between the grammatical hierarchy, linguistic accent, alliteration, and metrical stress and about the applicability of elision, apocope, syncope, and other metrical devices.

Chapters Two and Three will focus on the pictures of the b-verse and a-verse that emerge from these assumptions, and this section of the introduction sets the stage for those investigations, beginning with the a-verse. The discussion of the a-verse meter overlaps a great deal with this chapter's earlier discussion on the link between linguistic accent and metrical stress. Because beat-counts are at stake in the discussion of a-verse meter, this discussion also gets to the heart of the earlier discussion about whether Middle English alliterative verse has a strong-stress meter. Many attempts have been made to state the meter of the a-verse. One difficulty is that whereas b-verse patterns comply with one of eight patterns, the a-verse has scores of possible patterns. In this study's corpus there are one hundred twenty-six different patterns. In addition to solidifying the case that the a-verse cannot have a b-verse pattern, Yakovlev attempts to identify 'minimum requirements' for the a-verse beyond this basic rule. In doing so, he agrees with Duggan in stating that the a-verse 'did not have a well-defined metrical form, but only showed certain rhythmic

preferences'.[66] Yakovlev still makes strides toward delineating its meter. He considers three-beat, as well as two-beat a-verses authentic and challenges Cable's suggestion that the a-verse has 'either two strong dips or three metrical stresses'.[67]

Yakovlev's constraints, especially on vowel qualities, explain much apparent overlap between a- and b-verse patterns. Cable partly affirms the b-verse constraint against full vowels in one-syllable dips. He asserts that 'final secondary stress is a significant missing pattern' at the end of the b-verse, and he offers the following test for determining the admissibility of line-final single metrically unstressed syllables: 'Any syllable that could be shifted to rhyming position in Chaucer or Gower could not occur at the end of the long line in Middle English alliterative verse.'[68]

The present study accepts much of Yakovlev's and Cable's work but calls into question the reliability of strict reduced/full vowel and rhyme/non-rhyme distinctions. It often is the case, for example, that syllables with full vowels fill positions that Yakovlev reserves for syllables with reduced vowels. In this verse, *her–* has a full vowel but constitutes a one-syllable dip:

x x x / x / x

Þat euer I made hem myself bot if I may herafter

'That I ever made them myself, however, that I may [look] to the future'

C.291

[66] See Yakovlev, *Development*, p. 169, and Hoyt N. Duggan, 'The Shape of the B-Verse in Middle English Alliterative Poetry', *Speculum,* 61 (1986), pp. 564-92.
[67] Yakovlev, *Development*, p. 197, and Cable, *English*, p. 86. Cable here uses the term 'strong dip' for what the present study refers to as 'multisyllabic dip'.
[68] Cable, 'Progress', p. 259.

Many a-verses remain problematic even after considering Yakovlev's constraints on full vowels. The study's basic guidelines, before any promotion, cause 54 of the 1,000 a-verses in the corpus to have metrical patterns that match the b-verse template. Since our working hypothesis is that a-verses must be metrically different from b-verses, these a-verses at first appear problematic. If one accepts Yakovlev's full-vowel hypothesis, though, only 15 remain unmetrical, including:

/ x x x / x

Ferre out in þe **f**elde and **f**eche3 mo geste3

'Far out on the land and bring more guests'

C.98

/ x x x / x

Kast vp on a **c**lyffe þer **c**ostes lay drye

'Cast up on a cliff where coasts lay dry'

C.460

x / x x x / x[69]

þen **h**urled on a **h**epe þe **h**elme and þe sterne

'Then fell in a heap, the tiller and the rudder'

P.149

These verses are currently unaccounted for. One possibility is that the verse-final words are accusative and, therefore, should take no inflection. The resulting patterns——/xxx/, /xxx/, and x/xxx/——all would be acceptable in the a-verse. Since objects of the prepositions *in* and

[69] The second syllable of disyllabic *þen* 'then' (< OE *þanne*) elides with the following *h-*.

on are treated as datives in the rest of the corpus, though, they are assumed to be dative here and, therefore to have a final *-e*. As Chapter Five will show, the three problematic a-verses above more likely qualify as metrical through the assignment of metrical stress to a third syllable. The point to keep in mind here is that there are a-verses that can be salvaged as metrical only by giving them third beats. The legitimacy of three-beat a-verses is not an idea that all metrists accept. There is disagreement about constraints on the number of beats per verse. The b-verse has two beats and beliefs about the a-verse are divided.

Many metrists find only two beats in a-verses. In their separate work, Joan Turville-Petre and Marie Borroff assert that there are only two beats.[70] Putter, Jefferson, and Stokes assert that the a-verse must have exactly two beats, but they propose a new procedure for eliminating metrical stresses.[71] In their model, 'semantic load' plays an important role.[72] They argue that semantically lighter items from the open word-classes, such as the noun *man*, tend to count as metrically unstressed in crowded a-verses. They assert that metrical stress depends on contrastive accentuation, de-accenting background information, rules for set phrases and idioms, the Rhythm Rule, and accentual properties of individual word sub-

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[70] See Turville-Petre, 'Metre', and Marie Edith Borroff, *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight: A Stylistic and Metrical Study*, Yale Studies in English, 152 (New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 1962), pp. 190-210.

[71] Putter, Jefferson, and Stokes, *Studies*, p. 260.

[72] Putter, Jefferson, and Stokes, *Studies*, p. 196. For problems in their ideas regarding predictability of linguistic accent, see Dwight LeMerton Bolinger, 'Accent is Predictable (If You're A Mind-Reader)', *Language,* 48 (1972), pp. 633-44. Also, although semantic emphasis does not influence the meter substantially, there certainly is an important theoretical issue at play here: The approach of Putter, Jefferson, and Stokes implies that answers to current questions in metrics can come from answering questions about linguistic accent. The status of metrically stressed syllables would come, in this case, directly from linguistic accentuation rather than from metrical promotions of linguistically unaccented syllables.

classes. In their data, semantic weight tends to correspond to alliteration, so the two syllables that retain beats tend to be from alliterating words.[73]

On the other hand, Putter, Jefferson, and Stokes explicitly exclude crowded a-verses from their chapter on assignment of metrical stress.[74] They do not claim to provide definitive conclusions on crowded a-verses. They merely suggest a belief that the rules are somewhat complex. In discussing crowded a-verses, they assert, "Open-class words do not automatically take metrical stress, and [closed-class] words plainly can take the beat (even in the presence of two other open-class words in the same verse).'[75] This latter assertion plays down the role of the grammatical hierarchy in favor of other indicators of metrical stress.

In considering the number of beats permitted in the a-verse, one should keep in mind Wimsatt and Beardsley's objection to eliminating metrical stresses in iambic pentameter: 'One stress out of five in a pentameter line will inevitably be the weakest.'[76] Similarly, in Middle English alliterative verse, one of three or more candidates for metrical stress will inevitably have the weakest inferred linguistic accent. What is needed is a principle of meter more robust than identification of the two most heavily accented syllables in the verse.

In rejecting the possibility of a-verses with more than two beats, Inoue and Stokes assert, 'We do not ourselves believe in constant changes in the time signature of an

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[73] Putter, Jefferson, and Stokes, *Studies*. See, for example, chap. 5, 'The Structure of the A-Verse', pp. 217-54.
[74] See Putter, Jefferson, and Stokes, *Studies*, chap. 5, 'The Structure of the A-Verse', pp. 217-54, and, for the statement excluding 'from consideration those a-verses where the placement or number of the beats is uncertain or likely to be the subject of argument', p. 221.
[75] Putter, Jefferson, and Stokes, *Studies*, p. 257.
[76] Wimsatt and Beardsley, 'Concept', p. 592.

essentially two-beat a-verse.'[77] It is true that changing the 'time signature' in the middle of every line would be extraordinary, but it is actually an insistence on holding the number of beats at two that is the poetic analogue to incessant change in time signature. As Chapter Three shows, simple math shows that the added syllables in crowded a-verses, in the absence of additional metrical stresses, actually would change the rhythm. This dissertation challenges the views of Borroff, of Putter, Jefferson, and Stokes, and of Inoue and Stokes that a-verse beat-counts remain constant. Chapter Three examines how a two-beat a-verse theory affects rhythm. The study compares those rhythms to rhythms produced by three-beat verses in order to evaluate the merits of the different models.

In counting beats per verse, one must produce a model for assigning metrical stress. It is here that alliteration is an important factor in Middle English alliterative meter. There is much dispute over whether alliterating words automatically are metrically stressed. Elizabeth Solopova describes the Middle English 'divorce between the metrical stress, the semantic centre of the word and alliteration'.[78] This separation indeed occurred, but rhythmic consistency in the present study's corpus often depends on treating the alliterating syllables as metrically stressed. When Inoue demotes *depe* in

[77] Inoue and Stokes, 'Caesura', p. 2.
[78] Elizabeth Solopova, 'Alliteration and Prosody in Old and Middle English', in *Approaches to the Metres of Alliterative Verse*, ed. by Judith Jefferson and Ad Putter, Leeds Texts and Monographs, New Series, 17 (Leeds: School of English, University of Leeds, 2009), pp. 25–39 (32).

* x x x / x x / x

With **d**epe **d**iches and **d**erke and **d**redfulle of sighte

'With ditches deep and dark and dreadful to look at'

Piers.B.Prol.16

the problem is not in producing an inherently objectionable pattern.[79] The pattern xxx/xx/x, after all, is actually common in the a-verse and is acceptable, for example, in C.4a:

Fayre **f**ormeȝ myȝt he **f**ynde in **f**orþering his speche

x x x / x x / x

And in þe **c**ontrare **k**ark and **c**ombraunce huge

'Splendid themes could he find for fashioning his speech,

but in the contrasting themes [about uncleanness] distress and great disaster'

C.3-4

However, there is an important difference between subordinating *Piers*.Prol.16a *depe*, an alliterating member of the prominent adjective word-class, and leaving the series of non-alliterating function words *and in þe* in C.4a metrically unstressed. The following scansion of *Piers*.Prol.16a is an improvement on Inoue's in part because it acknowledges the alliteration in *depe*:

x /x / x x / x

With **d**epe **d**iches and **d**erke and **d**redfulle of sighte

Piers.B.Prol.16

[79] Noriko Inoue, 'A New Theory of Alliterative A-Verses', *The Yearbook of Langland Studies,* 18 (2004), pp. 107-32 (107-8).

The present study sometimes depends on the divorce that Solopova identifies. Alliterating Tier III words often occur as metrically unstressed. In particular contexts, rhythm can cause demotion even of Tier I and Tier II words. Such demotions will be discussed in Chapter Two. Typically, though, the assumption will be that where there are indications of metrical stress, alliteration is one more reason to assume metrical stress.

In addition to relying on the grammatical hierarchy and alliteration for guidance in metrical prominence, this study relies on assumptions about whether a particular category of syllable, the one actualized by final *-e*, counted as a syllable within the meter. (The question is not whether or not it is metrically stressed. When it does occur, it is always metrically unstressed.) The study observes historical final *-e*. That the historical final *-e* is metrically significant at the end of the long line is now widely accepted. Extending this assumption of metrical significance to the rest of the long line avoids the implausible implication that the poet scrupulously tended to historical endings in one part of the long line and then capriciously lopped them off elsewhere. The assumption thus is in keeping with both the convincing evidence for line-final historical *-e* and the assumption of uniformity across the caesura in the connection of poetic to normal language.

After establishing the legitimacy of three-beat a-verses, Chapter Three and Chapter Five explore the possibility of treating some a-verses as three-beat verses even though they lack three open-class words. Metrical promotion will play an important role in this argument, so this process and related processes will be discussed here. This dissertation distinguishes between Chaucer's use of promotion, the type of promotion that Putter, Jefferson, and Stokes describe, and a third type. Promotion in Chaucer is assignment of

metrical stress to a normally linguistically unaccented syllable because of its position relative to the metrical template. Chaucer's template coerces syllables without linguistic accent into metrical stress.

Putter, Jefferson, and Stokes use the term 'promotion' differently. For them, it is not the metrical template that promotes syllables from a low position in the grammatical hierarchy. Instead, it is semantic context that motivates the adjustment. The promotion thus occurs before any consideration of meter. Syllables become metrically stressed simply because they are construed as linguistically accented. By way of example, here is their scansion of a verse, with *at* entirely in boldface type to signify semantic emphasis on it:

*/ x x x x / x

At þe soper and **a**fter mony **a**þel songez

'At the supper and afterwards many splendid songs'

SGGK.1654 [80]

The preposition *at* is not automatically accented in normal speech. According to Putter, Jefferson, and Stokes, though, because it undergoes semantically-motivated linguistic promotion, it gets a beat here. They make a case that *at* should be metrically stressed for the same reason that it would be linguistically accented if, for example, one said, 'No, I didn't see my friend *at* the colloquium, but *after* it.' This dissertation attempts to demonstrate that multiple types of promotion operate in Middle English alliterative verse, but that none matches the metrical promotion in Chaucer or the linguistic promotion that Putter, Jefferson, and Stokes describe.

[80] Putter, Jefferson, and Stokes, *Studies*, p. 155, include the marks for beats but omit marks for all metrically unstressed syllables.

In considering what to promote, it is important to recognize that a contrast that classifies adverbs with nouns, adjectives, participles, and infinitives makes sense since adverbs have a relationship with linguistic sentence accent similar to that of the other four parts of speech. A lack of knowledge of patterns of linguistic accent in everyday ME limits assumptions one can make in evaluating how closely metrical stress is related to linguistic accentuation; however, MdnE patterns can serve as a guide. Not all native speakers will agree on assertions about linguistic sentence accent. It is reasonable, though, to think of adverbs as at least as prominent in these examples as the nouns:

Clearly, you need to do more work

William slept **soundly** all night

Do **not** come unprepared **ever again**

There are several scenarios requiring promotion of adverbs and other members of word-classes in the grammatical hierarchy's Tier II, but the majority of promotions are motivated by the need to break up excessively long sequences of metrically unstressed syllables. Because of the importance of alliteration in Middle English alliterative verse, it can serve as a cue to promote even Tier III words. Counting alliterating Tier III words as eligible for promotion resolves many mismatches between linguistic accent and metrical stress.

The potential for promotions accounts for a number of otherwise puzzling verses. For example, among the problematic a-verses that seem to fit the b-verse requirement of exactly one multisyllabic dip are those that have multisyllabic dips of more than three syllables, which are also known as extra-long dips. Putter, Jefferson, and Stokes suggest that

a-verses can have them and that b-verses cannot.[81] According to their theory, it is an extra-long dip that makes this string of words acceptable for the a-verse:

* / x x x x x /x

Trave þou neuer þat **t**ale vn**t**rwe þou hit fynde3

'You never should believe that false story [if] you should discover it'

C.587

Putter, Jefferson, and Stokes argue that the meter prohibits such rhythms in the b-verse. This dissertation explores the hypothesis that such sequences of more than three consecutive metrically unstressed syllables are actually unmetrical on both sides of the half line. The way to account for C.587a is to promote *neuer* to produce the pattern /xx/xx/x. Such a scansion would eliminate the extra-long dip, differentiate the verse from the set of patterns allowed in the b-verse, and match a pattern that occurs occasionally in crowded a-verses, as in C.155a:

/ x x / x x / x

Bynde3 **b**yhynde at his **b**ak boþe two his hande3

'Bind both his hands behind his back'

C.155

Typically, there are one-to-one correspondences between syllables as they are spelled and scansion marks, but there are some exceptions to this norm. Seeming inconsistencies occur in cases of elision, syncope, and unvoiced final *-e*, where syllables might be spelled (and perhaps even pronounced in everyday Middle English speech) but,

[81] Putter, Jefferson, and Stokes, *Studies*, p. 233.

following standard poetic practice, disregarded in metrical evaluation. In this verse, for example, the scansion ignores the *-e* of *lore* because the following *i-* of *is* elides it:

x x / x x x / x

Lo my lore is in þe loke lauce hit þer-inne

'Behold, my teaching is locked within you. Utter it therein'

P.350

It is important to establish the integrity of the system of scansion; otherwise, it could seem that syllables are dropped, added, metrically stressed, and metrically unstressed only to accommodate a preconceived theory of the meter. Following the assumptions detailed in this chapter can help to counter the perception that Middle English alliterative verse lacks a meter. As recently as 2000, Duggan made this controversial claim: 'If metrical systems must be defined in terms of "a regular and recurrent pattern in literary composition," then ME alliterative poems are not metrical'.[82] In order to minimize objections to local adjustments of scansions, these scansions will adhere closely to the assumptions. Occasionally, the study will clarify particular judgments and decisions made in scanning verses. In proposing systematization of studies in Middle English alliterative verse, Christine Chism emphasizes the need for such clarifications:

[82] Hoyt N. Duggan, 'Extended A-Verses in Middle English Alliterative Poetry', *Parergon,* 18 (2000), pp. 53-76, p. 75. For Duggan's term 'extended', the present study uses the term 'crowded'. The phrase in double quotations comes from Raymond Chapman, *Linguistics and Literature: An Introduction to Literary Stylistics* (London: Edward Arnold, 1973), p. 86. David A. Lawton, 'The Idea of Alliterative Poetry: Alliterative Meter and *Piers Plowman*', in *Suche Werkis to Werche: Essays on Piers Plowman in Honor of David C. Fowler*, ed. by Míċeál Vaughan (East Lansing, Michigan: Colleagues Press, 1993), pp. 147-68 (158), takes issue with Duggan's differing treatments of a- and b-verses.

> Scholars have not even agreed on what should be included in the corpus of Middle English alliterative poetry. They have worked at cross-purposes inventing their own metrical systems, notations, and terminologies (often not defined). They have concocted individual databases with different assumptions for inclusion, analysis, and projected rationale (How should the data be used? As a way to systematize editorial emendations? As a heuristic for linguistic problem-solving? As a method of metrical analysis?).[83]

These perceptions make detailed explanations of scansions especially important

The potential for confusing scansions arises because metrists' individual decisions can change single scansions in several ways. Word meanings, word classes (i.e., parts of speech), word forms (e.g., male, female, and neuter nouns, strong and weak verbs, and strong and weak adjectives), inflectional categories (e.g., case, number), and etymologies all influence scansions. Two verses from *Patience* illustrate these five important considerations:

x x / x / x

Much, **m**augre his **m**un he **m**ot nede suffer

'Great, despite his complaint, he must necessarily suffer'

P.44

[83] Christine Chism, *Alliterative Revivals*, The Middle Ages Series (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2002), p. 25. See also Stephen A. Barney, 'Langland's Prosody: The State of Study', in *The Endless Knot: Essays on Old and Middle English in Honor of Marie Borroff*, ed. by M. Teresa Tavormina and R. F. Yeager (Cambridge, UK: D.S. Brewer, 1995), pp. 65-85.

x x / / x

I herde on a halyday at a hyȝe masse

'I heard on a holy day at a high mass'

P.9

Since *nede* is in the adverb *word class*—a reading vindicated by the semantic appropriateness in this context of its *meaning*, 'necessarily'—it must be considered a candidate for metrical stress.

The treatment of *hyȝe* in P.9b as a single syllable derives from its identification with the *word sub-class* of strong adjectives, its association with the *inflectional category* of singular adjectives, and its *etymology*, which includes the one-syllable historical form *hēh*. When necessary for clarity, this type of technical information will accompany scansions. Collectively, such annotation may serve as a standard for future efforts to make metrical analyses accessible to scholars in other fields.

Two important measures are taken in this study to help clarify scansions. To the major and minor assumptions will be added occasional technical assumptions about Middle English phonology. The study will make clear the host of technical assumptions that go into scansions. While scanning, metrists refer to various properties of individual verses. They suggest, but do not always clearly state, correspondences between linguistic features and the metrical status of particular syllables. One metrist's technical assumptions often contradict others' assertions. For example, Barney reduces *-es* to *-s*, making *perelles*,

felones, and *angeles* disyllabic.[84] He does not scan *Piers*.C.21.74a, but one might deduce from his commentary on *-es* a preference for this scansion:

/ x x x / x x / x

Angeles out of heuene come knelyng and songe

'Angels came out of heaven, kneeled and sang'

Piers.C.21.74

In contrast, other metrists count *-es* as a full syllable. Duggan counts three syllables in *burynes*, and Cable considers *fantasies* a four-syllable word.[85] The ending -ING provides another example of metrists' contradictory assumptions. Citing the variable status of *-ynge* in Chaucer, Barney allows for the possibility of an unpronounced *-e* in this ending, but Yakovlev gives an assumption of a syllabic final *-e* (omitted from the manuscript) on *talkyng* as a reason for providing this scansion:

x / x x / x

And þe teccheles termes of talkyng noble

'And the flawless phrases of noble conversation'

SGGK.917[86]

There is confusion amongst historical linguists about this particular technical issue, and none of the few dozen *-ing(e)*/*-yng(e)* forms in the present study's corpus indicates conclusively the syllable count (whether one syllable or two) of present participial and verbal noun *-ing(e)*/*-yng(e)* endings. Because Bernhard ten Brink refers to instability in

[84] Barney, 'Revised', p. 281.
[85] See Duggan, 'Extended', p. 72, and Cable, *English*, p. 86.
[86] See Barney, 'Revised', p. 281, and Yakovlev, *Development*, p. 156 n. 78.

participial and verbal noun *-ing(e)* endings and seems to leave open the possibility of historical and analogical final *-e* in almost all cases, the present study assumes disyllabic *-ing(e)*, whether in present participles or verbal nouns.[87] The broader point here is that technical details of such specificity will be noted as they arise.

The second measure taken in the study is that every Middle English alliterative verse mentioned by number will be quoted in full within the context of at least the rest of its long line. This measure makes it easier for the reader to include rhythmic context in considerations of metrical status. It also empowers readers to engage the verses on their own in order to develop their own views.

One way both to identify true metrical recurrence and to meet standards of clarity is to pay attention to the relation between spellings and presumed pronunciations. This metrical analysis therefore relies on assumptions about the relations between manuscript word-forms, their Middle English phonetic forms, and the metrical status of their syllables. Manuscript spellings vary in their reliability as indicators of Middle English pronunciation. Smithers, for example, records the unreliability of spelled *-en* in the *Harley Lyrics*. Other parts of Smithers' argument, on the other hand, overvalue orthography. In discussing the word *are-dawes* (*Havelok* 27 *It was a king bi are-dawes*), he writes, 'The internal *-e-* is etymologically unjustified, and has clearly been introduced to prevent two successive on-beats here.'[88] The present study denies etymologically unjustified spellings any such privilege in ascertaining rhythm. In the *Havelok* line, one would need to search elsewhere for ameliorization of the apparent non-iambic x/x/x//x pattern.

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[87] ten Brink, *Chaucers*, p. 135.
[88] Smithers, 'Scansion', p. 197-98.

Putter, Jefferson, and Stokes take a position different from the present study's in giving greater credence to manuscript spellings. They write, 'The variation between infinitives in *-e* and *-en* in this corpus is patterned'.[89] In spite of Putter, Jefferson, and Stokes' argument, the fact is that once a token has been reliably identified, disregarding spelling is legitimate and often necessary. Saying that an etymologically unjustified letter can 'prevent two successive on-beats' misses the point that spellings are not always reliable. Scansions in the present study are not sensitive to a manuscript's inclusion of letters like the *-e* in *are-*. *Giltlees* may very well be trisyllabic, but the *-e-* need not appear for it to count metrically. Authorial choice, scribes' linguistic backgrounds, and scribal errors cause variation in spelling. The spellings often do not reflect words' patterns of metrical stress. Particular spellings of words are only indications of intended lexical items; they are not necessarily reliable for information about pronunciations.[90]

The set of firm assumptions and the stipulated areas of flexibility serve as the foundation for the ensuing metrical analysis. The plausibility of the set of scansions that results will serve as a measure of the validity of the assumptions. This is one of the main benefits of the metrical analysis. In proceeding this way, the study relies on Robert Fulk's

[89] Putter, Jefferson, and Stokes, *Studies*, p. 81. Their corpus comprises six Middle English alliterative poems, including *Cleanness* and *Patience*.

[90] As Paul Kiparsky, 'Metrics and Morphophonemics in the *Rigveda*', in *Contributions to Generative Phonology*, ed. by Michael Keith Brame (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1972), pp. 171-200 (176), shows for Sanskrit verse and suggests for verse generally, proper metrical scansions need not correspond to poets' pronunciations, nor even to any pronunciation that the word ever had: 'Prosodic constraints may involve stages in the [phonological] derivation that are not (even optionally) realized on the phonetic level'.

work in metrical theory.[91] Although an interest in dates and dialects of medieval authors drives Fulk's argument, there are important guiding principles in it that have influenced the methodology of this dissertation. First, this dissertation accepts the notion that the two main areas of work in meter are the 'study of individual elements in the system' and 'the study of variation in the set of principles that govern verse construction itself'. Also, this study adheres to Fulk's model of inquiry, which involves hypothesis and evaluation. Fulk outlines some of the criticisms leveled against this model. Critics have charged that inherent subjectivity often taints hypotheses. They also assert that there is no standard of pure objectivity. The idea in Fulk is that it is acceptable that there is not complete objectivity in the advancing of hypotheses since subsequent evaluation of a hypothesis' validity meets this standard. This dissertation takes as a guiding principle the fact that hypothesis-evaluation is the path to progress. Even discredited hypotheses can count as progress if they lead to more promising hypotheses.

In testing hypotheses about metrical constraints, the study also will address the broader question of what meter 'does'. Kristin Hanson and Paul Kiparsky suggest the potential for verse to convey 'an attribution of the authority of the text not to the speaker, but to a truth beyond him.'[92] Redeeming Middle English alliterative verse as strictly metrical can recover for readers that sense of authority that has remained dormant for six centuries.

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[91] Robert Dennis Fulk, *A History of Old English Meter* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1992).

[92] Kristin Hanson and Paul Kiparsky, 'The Nature of Verse and its Consequences for the Mixed Form', in *Prosimetrum: Cross-Cultural Perspectives on Narrative in Prose and Verse*, ed. by Joseph Harris and Karl Reichl (Cambridge, UK: Boydell & Brewer, 1997), pp. 17-44 (p. 41 n. 29).

Hanson and Kiparsky consider equivalence an important part of this authority: 'The extraordinary recurrence of linguistic equivalences characteristic of verse can likewise be understood as a formal means through which an experience of recognizing a universal truth is induced.'[93] One might hesitate to apply the term 'equivalence' to Middle English alliterative verse since it is unclear where equivalence occurs. There are not equal numbers of syllables or metrical stresses per line; nor are there equal numbers of metrically unstressed syllables per line or per metrically stressed syllable. Still, adherence to metrical regularity can have this effect. Dom Jean Leclercq also comments on the inextricability of form and meaning. On the poetry of twelfth-century French mystic Bernard of Clairvaux, he writes, 'La musicalité ne se peut séparer de la vérité.' ['The musicality cannot be separated from the truth.'][94]

Rather than a full template, multiple constraints applying to different parts of the long line guide readers' rhythmic expectations. Middle English alliterative metrists often attempt to identify rhythmic patterns that rarely or never occur. They then articulate the meter of this verse through 'negative definition'. Until now, scholars have considered extra-long sequences of metrically unstressed syllables both metrical and moderately common. Many of those sequences include words with potential for both linguistic and metrical stress. There are often non-alliterating adverbs, finite primary verbs, and pronominal adjectives in these sequences. Treating these words as metrically stressed reduces the

[93] Hanson and Kiparsky, 'The Nature of Verse and its Consequences for the Mixed Form', p. 42.
[94] Dom Jean Leclercq, 'Sur le Caractère Littéraire des Sermons de S. Bernard', in *Recueil d'Etudes sur Saint Bernard et ses Écrits*, Raccolta di Studi e Testi, 114 (Rome: Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura, 1969), pp. 163-212. Kane, 'Music', pp. 62-3 n. 48.

frequency of extra-long dips. This treatment of Tier II non-alliterating words strengthens the case that one of the metrical constraints of Middle English alliterative verse is a prohibition against extra-long dips.

This handling of individual words generates a set of metrical patterns for a poem's verses. To say that the task is to find which patterns can occur in the a-verse and which can occur in the b-verse is to suggest that there are catalogues of acceptable patterns of beats and offbeats for each half-line, catalogues that ideally could be summarized in simple statements—statements that would cover the dozens of patterns for each half-line. Such a description, though, would obscure an important point. It would seem that all one need do is consider the grammatical hierarchy, verse boundaries, and alliteration, collate the patterns, and extrapolate the meter. To do this would be to go astray. As Cable writes about Old English poetry, 'A list of 206 types is not the meter but a result of the meter'.[95] The meter will be a set of simple rules.

This study's delineation of the meter includes evaluations of syntactic, etymological, rhythmic, and alliterative cues for metrical beats. These evaluations, an explanation of the importance of metrical dips, and a reliance on recent work on b-verses and on elision have broad significance. These contributions will help scholars in other areas of Middle English alliterative verse by strengthening the foundation of metrical knowledge on which they must draw. This knowledge also will help editors by providing metrical evidence on which to base textual decisions.[96] Also, as with all advances in metrical knowledge, the findings of this

[95] Cable, *English*, p. 166 n.6.
[96] See especially Duggan, 'Shape', on the growing importance of meter in the preparation of text editions.

dissertation will have pedagogical value since they will bring the field a step closer to formulating a description of the meter that literature students can understand.

The study's methodology is designed to make these potential benefits more likely to emerge. The metrical, grammatical, and dialectal diversity that characterizes the 90,000 long lines of the Alliterative Revival complicates the metrical analysis.[97] This study treats a subset of the tradition in order to point the way to broader metrical principles. The subset comprises the *Gawain*-poet's 531-line *Patience* and the first 469 lines of *Cleanness*, by the same author; hence, the research corpus consists of one thousand long lines. The argument directly quotes, glosses, and scans about three hundred verses from the corpus. These *Gawain*-poet works are reliable for a study of meter because they are relatively close to the original. They are among the few Alliterative Revival poems with 'little evidence of dialectal scribal translation'.[98] All scansions were entered into the project database, a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet with one row per verse and scores of columns for recording individual verses' properties. This database facilitated evidence collation, the testing of hypotheses, identification of metrical patterns, statistical analysis, and comparisons to other studies.

One limit of this research is that it is difficult for one person to scan 90,000 long lines of poetry. The choice of a reliable representative sample helps to mitigate this limitation. On the other hand, the strongest of arguments go far beyond empirical data alone, for even high frequency of a rhythm is not the same thing as a meter. In fact, as Brogan points out, quite the opposite can be true: 'The paradigm of the iambic pentameter

[97] See Putter, Jefferson, and Stokes, *Studies*, p. 6.
[98] Putter, Jefferson, and Stokes, *Studies*, p. 11. See also *Patience*, ed. by Anderson, p. 2.

(x/x/x/x/x/) is not statistically preponderant—it appears only about 25% of the time.[99] The aim is to present a collection of verses that demonstrates how changes to the prevailing theories can bring Middle English alliterative meter into sharp focus.

A large number of resources provide guidance in speculating about Middle English linguistic word accent. J. J. Anderson's apparatuses of *Patience* and *Cleanness*; Joseph Bosworth's *Anglo-Saxon Dictionary* (available in electronic full-text searchable form); and the *Middle English Dictionary* provide lexical information, including meanings, variant spellings, inflected forms, and etymons.[100] Borroff's close translation of *Patience*, William Vantuono's translations of *Cleanness* and *Patience*, and the online version of the *Oxford English Dictionary* provide additional valuable judgments.[101] Arthur Borden's etymological information is especially useful for distinguishing historically weak and strong verbs.[102]

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[99] Terry Vance F. Brogan, 'Meter', in *The New Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics*, ed. by Alex Preminger, Terry Vance F. Brogan, Frank J. Warnke, O. B. Hardison, Jr., and Earl Miner (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), pp. 768-83 (p. 771).

[100] *Cleanness*, ed. by Anderson; *Patience*, ed. by Anderson; Joseph Bosworth and T. Northcote Toller, *An Anglo-Saxon Dictionary*, 2nd edn (London: Oxford University Press, 1972); Joseph Bosworth and T. Northcote Toller, *Bosworth-Toller Anglo-Saxon Dictionary*, ed. by Sean Crist, Version 29 July 2011, *Faculty of Arts Website* (Charles University in Prague, 2010), Web, accessed 15 April 2012, <http://bosworth.ff.cuni.cz/>; *Middle English Dictionary*, ed. by Frances McSparran, *The Middle English Compendium* (University of Michigan, 2006), Web, accessed 30 September 2010, <http://quod.lib.umich.edu/m/med/>.

[101] For the first translation, see *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight, Patience, and Pearl: Verse Translations*, trans. by Marie Edith Borroff (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 2001). For Vantuono's translations, see the list of quoted editions above. See *OED Online*, ed. by John Simpson (Oxford University Press, 2009), Web, accessed 9 April 2012, <http://www.oed.com/>.

[102] Arthur R. Borden, Jr., *A Comprehensive Old-English Dictionary* (Lanham, Maryland: University Press of America, 1982).

Chapter Two: An Environment for Demotion in the B-Verse

As Chapter One shows, the theory of Middle English alliterative meter presented in this study comprises a large set of interrelated assumptions, known constraints, scanning conventions, and theoretical underpinnings. It would be useful to begin the analysis with a topic that will help the reader to assimilate all of the variables and mechanisms. There are a number of subtopics that could serve this purpose. One could focus just on distributions of metrically unstressed syllables or just on metrically stressed syllables. One could instead think along syntactic lines and consider the distributions and metrical roles of members of particular word classes. Since the mid-line caesura constitutes a perfectly neat division of the corpus of data, this chapter will take what occurs on the right, generally shorter side of that division as its focus.

The b-verse serves as a useful point of entry into Middle English alliterative metrics in several ways. As the part of the long line against which the a-verse is sometimes defined negatively, it is something of a core. Its element of syllable-counting also makes it a good starting point, and for a few reasons. First, with its syllable-counting—strict in one part, looser in another—it constitutes a microcosm of the metrically variegated long line. Second, since the syllable-counting element is stronger in the b-verse than in the a-verse, the second half of the long line can be easier to grasp for readers more familiar with Chaucer's, Milton's, and Frost's poetry than with *Beowulf* and later alliterative verse. Third, a syllable-counting environment is the optimal context for a reader attempting to assimilate dozens of technical assumptions relating to scansions. In addition to helping the reader to

become familiar with this tradition of poetry generally, this chapter sets the stage for a discussion of the a-verse. By exploring multiple possible causes for metrical demotion in the b-verse and then settling on one primary cause, this chapter fills out the theoretical framework necessary for evaluating one of the most important issues in Middle English alliterative verse, namely whether conditions in the a-verse are sufficient for demotion.

The b-verse can serve as a useful vehicle for demonstrating the operation of most of the metrical rules and assumptions presented in Chapter One. In reading one b-verse after another, the reader can come to see that what at first may seem like an overwhelming array of variety actually always boils back down to the basic b-verse requirements:

- exactly two beats in every verse
- two strings of metrically unstressed syllables flanking the first beat, occurring in the order 'multisyllabic dip then short dip' or 'short dip then multisyllabic dip'
- a second beat followed by exactly one metrically unstressed syllable.

These requirements amount to tolerance for only these eight patterns in the b-verse:

x/xx/x	x/xxx/x	/xx/x	/xxx/x
xx/x/x	xxx/x/x	xx//x	xxx//x

An understanding of this simple fact about the b-verse can give the reader a foothold in the tradition's meter. Comprehension of the b-verse configuration translates readily to a sense for the whole long line since it can serve as the basis for a rough approximation of the situation in the rest of the line: The a-verse disallows all of these patterns.

Scanning the verse in which only eight metrical patterns are possible is a good way to practice combining all of the different rules, assumptions, and conventions described in Chapter One. The requirement of exactly two beats per verse makes using the grammatical hierarchy to determine metrical stress fairly easy. The occasional technical challenges help the reader to assimilate the role that alliteration can play in scansions. Where the grammatical hierarchy seems to indicate that a verse would lack a second beat, alliteration can show which normally less prominent word should be metrically stressed.

Within this environment where only eight metrical patterns are allowed, the reader also is well positioned to begin to negotiate other metrical issues. In isolation, such technicalities as the presence or absence of final *-e* can be easier to grasp. The highly controlled environment also means that examples of elision and apocope rise to the surface as fairly obviously needed. Attempts to match one of the eight allowed metrical patterns also give readers exercise in considering other technical matters. Where there are discrepancies between initial scansions and the b-verse template, a reader can consider whether discrepancies between spelling and pronunciation might be the reason. Ambiguity about which Middle English word a particular spelling represents, about part of speech, about gender, and about inflectional categories (tense, person, case, and number) also become easier to handle in the b-verse. This environment also can help the reader to learn that etymological information can help to account for discrepancies between initial scansions and the b-verse template.

The value of the b-verse as a starting point goes beyond the convenience of learning to scan in a well-defined environment. The syllable-counting in this part of the long line

makes the b-verse the part of the Middle English alliterative poetry that most resembles the poetry with which MdnE readers are most familiar. The second half-line is a good stepping stone for the reader because it counts syllables with a precision approaching that found in the poetry of Chaucer, Shakespeare, Milton, and the other great practitioners of English iambic pentameter. MdnE speakers are raised on poetry that is famously strict in its syllable-counting. One product of this precision is something that also will make the b-verse seem familiar to readers. When a metrical template is so strict, discrepancies can arise between the template and inferred linguistic accent. This is something that readers handle readily in Chaucer; thus, MdnE readers might experience the metrical demotions that occur in the Middle English alliterative b-verse as familiar as well.

The characteristics of the b-verse that resemble features of English iambic pentameter make the poetry's less familiar features easier to assimilate. Since the less familiar features are still present in the b-verse, central to the a-verse, and at the heart of the tradition generally, the b-verse serves an important heuristic role. It can act as a bridge for the reader between Chaucer's strict template and Middle English alliterative verse's greater reliance on the grammatical hierarchy.

Chapter Three will examine the a-verse in detail, but a preview here of how the b-verse provides a 'bridge' for understanding the a-verse can help the reader to contextualize the rest of the present chapter. The a-verse and b-verse are different from each other in many ways, on many levels. One would correctly guess from a quick glance at *Cleanness* or *Patience* that the a-verse is longer than the b-verse. Measured by the average number of syllables in each verse, this guess holds up. Digging deeper one finds that the

catalogue of metrical patterns exhibited by the a-verse is much longer than the list of eight patterns exhibited by the b-verse; moreover, the two catalogues constitute mutually exclusive sets of patterns. This difference leads metrists to acknowledge the metrical differentiation of the two half-lines that Chapter One discussed.

There is a difference between the a-verse and the b-verse deeper than the average difference in numbers of syllables, the difference in the number of possible metrical patterns, and the different memberships of the lists of possible metrical patterns. The b-verse's compliance with a minimally varying template and the a-verse's more consistent adherence to the grammatical hierarchy constitute crucial differences between the two half-lines. Invoking Terry Brogan's terminology from the present study's first chapter, we can say that the b-verse meter is relatively more deductive and less inductive; conversely, the a-verse is relatively more inductive and less deductive.

This fundamental difference, rather than the superficial differences, between the half-lines accounts for several phenomena in the long line. In the b-verse, the deductive element keeps the number of possible metrical patterns low. In a less thorough but analogous way, this low number of possible metrical patterns influences the b-verse the way that the one metrical pattern x/x/x/x/x/ influences the iambic pentameter line. It creates the possibility for mismatches between inferred linguistic accent and an expected metrical pattern. In turn, the mismatches lead to metrical adjustments akin to those that occur in iambic pentameter. When syllables with inferred linguistic accent bump up against the expectation of one of the eight acceptable metrical patterns, metrical demotion resolves the discrepancy. This chapter will explore several precise mechanisms for this coercion in the

b-verse, including pressures within and external to the b-verse, before settling on one of the mechanisms as the primary driving force for demotion. By the end of the chapter, a framework thus will have emerged for evaluating metrists' attempts to invoke metrical demotion to explain scansions on the other side of the half-line, in the a-verse.

This chapter explores the viability of two main approaches to demotion in the b-verse. The first section explores the possibility that line-wide constraints generate the demotions. The second section explores whether, instead, the element of template meter in the b-verse accounts by itself for the presence of demotion in the b-verse. It can be helpful in this analysis to distinguish in notation between syllables that are metrically unstressed by default and syllables that are metrically unstressed only after demotion. For this purpose we shall temporarily adopt George R. Stewart's lower case and capital letter *o*'s and *s*'s to scan the line, where *o* and *S* stand for standard offbeats and beats and *O* and *s* stand for demoted and promoted syllables.[103] A line from Shakespeare's *Sonnet 55* would be scanned as follows. Position seven is scanned with a capital *O* because it would attracted linguistic accent but would be metrically unstressed.

o S o S o S O S o S

Nor Mars his sword, nor war's quick fire shall burn

Shakespeare, *Sonnet 55.7*[104]

[103] George Rippey Stewart, *The Technique of English Verse* (Port Washington, New York: Kennikat Press, 1966), p. 223.
[104] All citations of Shakespeare are from William Shakespeare, *The Complete Signet Classic Shakespeare*, ed. by Sylvan Barnet (New York, New York; Chicago, Illinois; San Francisco, California; and Atlanta, Georgia: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1972).

Since the *Gawain*-poet took pains to differentiate the a-verse metrical patterns from those of the b-verse (as discussed in Chapter One), one should consider whether this differentiation can directly account for demotions. As a starting point, consider whether crowded b-verses (i.e., b-verses with more than the normal two candidates for ictus) like the following one match a-verse patterns before demotion.

o S o S S o

Of þe lenþe of Noe lyf to lay a lel date

'concerning the length of Noah's life to set a correct date'

C.425

If such verses occurred in a-verses as well as b-verses, they would be among the few b-verses in the corpus that transgressed the principle of metrical differentiation of the two half-lines. No matter how one looks at the data, though, it does not support such a view. The most popular crowded b-verse pattern, which would be oSoSSo before demotion, occurs in less than one half of one percent of crowded a-verses. Although 75% of all crowded b-verses have the patterns oSoSSo, oSSoSo, or oSooSSo, only three a-verses in the corpus have any of these patterns. As another measure of the degree of overlap between crowded b-verses and crowded a-verses, one could consider all crowded b-verse patterns, even the ones represented by only one b-verse, such as SSooSo. Fewer than 10% of all crowded a-verses use any of those patterns. In short, there is limited overlap across the caesura in crowded verse patterns. Since the b-verses are differentiated from the a-verse even before demotion, immediate pressure toward metrical differentiation cannot account for b-verse demotion. Although it is true that b-verse demotions are consistent with the

principle of metrical differentiation of the two half-lines, refraining from demotion would also comply with the principle.

An account of demotion that relies strictly on differentiation between the a-verse and the b-verse would be an appeal to a principle that already enjoys wide acceptance. It can be worthwhile, though, to consider whether there are other constraints that are similarly line-wide, but that so far have gone unnoticed. Parsing the more local environment in which b-verse demotion occurs can shed light on this possibility.

This search for a line-wide proscription can begin with two observations about the crowded b-verses. First, the demoted syllable in the b-verse almost always occurs near the b-verse's second-to-last syllable. Either no syllable (as in C.227b *schor laste* below) or only a single syllable with a reduced vowel (as in C.224b *dayez lencþe*, also below) separates the two syllables:

o S oo O S o

So fro **h**euen to **h**elle þat **h**atel schor laste

'Thus from heaven to hell did that deadly shower extend'

C.227

S o O o S o

Fylter **f**enden **f**olk **f**orty dayez lencþe

'Fiendish folk pressed together forty days in length'

C.224

Using 'e' to represent a reduced vowel and parentheses to represent an optional element and assuming the regular line-final reduced vowel, we can sum up this common scenario in the scheme .../(e)/e.

For purely heuristic purposes, consider whether demotion of the first (potential) beat in the scheme .../(e)/e could be traced to some line-wide proscription. Hypothetically, a proscription against verses ending in .../(e)/e would help to explain demotion of the first beat in this scheme in crowded b-verses. Such a proscription would have to align with the rest of the verses in the corpus. As it happens, it certainly does not. A multitude of verses in both the a-verse and the b-verse violate the hypothetical proscription.

Consider another observation: A large majority of crowded b-verses align not just with the scheme .../(e)/e, but with the more specific scheme (x)/x/(e)/e. (The *x*'s indicate syllables with vowels of any quality, and *e*'s again indicate metrically unstressed syllables with reduced vowels. Here again the slashes indicate ictus candidates.) Following the same line of reasoning used in the preceding paragraph, one could speculate that demotion of the middle of the three candidates for ictus results from some line-wide proscription. A proscription against verses that 1) lack a multisyllabic dip and 2) have the verse-final pattern .../(e)/e would help to explain demotion of the middle beat in (x)/x/(e)/e. This time, the proposed line-wide proscription is consistent not only with the desired adjustment to the crowded b-verse, but also with what is known about standard b-verses and all a-verses. In standard b-verses, any verse that ends with .../(e)/e, by the requirements laid out for the b-verse in Chapter One, must open with a multisyllabic dip; therefore, no standard b-verse can contravene the proposed proscription. As for the a-verse, it turns out that no a-verses

(whether standard or crowded) violate the proposed proscription. Standard a-verses of course avoid the pattern since they have only two beats instead of three. All crowded a-verses also avoid the pattern. A line-wide proscription against (x)/x/(e)/e thus would account for almost all b-verse demotions and for the absence of the pattern in the a-verse.

This identification of a possible line-wide proscription is valuable because it opens the possibility of unifying the theories of a-verse and b-verse meters. The proscription, though, seems quite technical and is therefore weaker than it could be. If it could be shown that there is a rule that is similarly line-wide but that is also simpler, then the simpler rule would be more appealing. An increase in simplicity entails an increase in the plausibility of the theory. If it is a rule that could be passed on easily to medieval poets, it has a stronger claim to the position of centerpiece in a metrical theory.

Consider whether the following rule accounts for both the activation of demotion in the b-verse and complies with what occurs in the a-verse: Every verse must have a multisyllabic dip. Since almost all crowded b-verses match one of the patterns indicated by (x)/x/(e)/e, it certainly does account for the demotion. The proposed rule prohibits acceptance of all three ictus candidates in the scheme as metrical stresses since that would leave the b-verses without multisyllabic dips. Since the demotions produce multisyllabic dips, the resulting b-verses comply with the requirement. Standard b-verses of course comply with the rule since it is part of the requirements of the standard b-verse outlined in Chapter One. On the other side of the caesura, compliance is similarly thorough. Well over 99% of all a-verses follow the rule. The ubiquity of multisyllabic dips in the a-verse,

which Inoue and Stokes emphasize again and again, far from making demotion necessary, is exactly what makes demotion in crowded a-verses unnecessary.

The two a-verses that fail to meet the multisyllabic dip requirement have one-syllable dips that have full vowels.

/ x / x / x

Hare3, hertte3 also to þe hy3e runnen

'Hares, [and] harts also ran to the high hills'

C.391

x / x / / x

A lodes-mon ly3tly lep vnder hachches

'A steersman nimbly leapt under [the] hatches'

P.179

Changing the requirement so that a one-syllable dip with a full vowel is good enough will make the requirement robust. Rather than requiring a multisyllabic dip, the rule should require what we shall call a 'lull'—a rhythmic break with a length intermediate between the length of a caesura and the length of the shortest dips. A lull can be either a multisyllabic dip or a single-syllable dip whose vowel is a full vowel. Single-syllable dips with reduced vowels do not count as lulls; nor do 'zero-dips' (i.e., the theorized positions between otherwise adjacent beats). The observation, therefore, is: Every verse must have a lull.

The requirement of at least one multisyllabic or full-vowel dip is a good example of a rhythmic feature of the entire long line that has verse-specific metrical ramifications. In the b-verse the rhythmic feature combines with the metrical prohibition against medial and

final full-vowel dips to create the now familiar metrical requirement of a multisyllabic dip. In the absence of a multisyllabic dip in crowded b-verses, demotion is a mechanism for meeting the requirement because it always creates a multisyllabic dip. In the a-verse, the metrical license to compose medial and final full-vowel dips provides a mechanism for meeting the rhythmic rule. Thus, one rhythm can unite mutually exclusive sets of metrical patterns. Another way of looking at the difference between the a-verse and the b-verse is this: The unadjusted crowded a-verse has a lull already, so it automatically has the tumbling rhythm that comes with combinations of lulls and other dips; the crowded b-verse, since it at first lacks a lull, requires demotion in order to have that tumbling rhythm.

There is a better way to account for demotion, apart from the line-wide requirement of a lull in every verse. The case for demotion in the b-verse is fairly strong even without any consideration of conditions in the a-verse. There are only eight possible patterns of offbeats and beats in the standard b-verse. This number of possibilities is so low that patterns like those exhibited by the following two verses, with three ictus candidates, stand out in the context of a corpus in which 97% of the b-verses are standard:

* o S o S S o

Alle þat **g**lyde3 and **g**ot3 and **g**ost of lyf habbe3

'All that comes and goes and has spirit of life'

C.325

* o S o S S o

Hym **a**ȝtsum in þat **a**rk as **a**þel God lyked

'Him, as one of the eight in that ark, as [the] noble God desired'[105]

C.411

There are only twelve such patterns in the corpus, and Cable reports only ten SoSSo patterns in a collection of 2200 Middle English alliterative b-verses.[106] This scarcity makes it reasonable to consider which of the eight acceptable patterns they come closest too. Verses like the following come to mind:

o S o o S o

For **w**onder **w**roth is þe **w**yȝ þat **w**roȝt alle þinges

'For exceedingly angry is the God who created all things'

C.5

o S o oS o

With mony **b**lame ful **b**ygge a **b**offet peraunter

'With very many strong rebukes a blow perhaps'

C.43

Having such a short list of metrical patterns that are acceptable for standard b-verses makes the meter in all b-verses effectively deductive; this deductive quality makes the b-verse resemble template meters like iambic pentameter in some ways. This connection makes an enormous amount of scholarship on template meters relevant to the

[105] The brackets are the translator's.
[106] Cable, *English*, p. 103. The present study confirms the finding there that no a-verses have this pattern.

b-verse, and work that has been done on demotion in template meters is especially relevant here. This section marshals the work of Seymour Chatman and of Stewart on template meters to account for demotions in Middle English alliterative b-verses.

Chatman's classification of kinds of metrical variation helps to explain aspects of Middle English alliterative verse. One of Chatman's main categories is 'countermetrical variation'. One subclass of this variation is 'the choice of degree of actual phonemic stress [linguistic accent] used to fill either metrical point [a metrically stressed position] or zero [a metrically unstressed position]'.[107] A line of poetry with close alignment of linguistic accent and metrical stress would exhibit no such variation. The last line of this passage, with a demotion in metrical position seven, exhibits countermetrical variation:

> When wasteful war shall statues overturn,
>
> And broils root out the work of masonry,
>
> o S o S o S O S o S
>
> Nor Mars his sword, nor war's quick fire shall burn
>
> Shakespeare, *Sonnet 55*.5-7

As an adjective, *quick* would attract linguistic accent; flanked between two accented syllables and positioned in a metrically unstressed position, though, it is not metrically stressed.

Demotion is one of the simplest kinds of countermetrical variation, introducing only marginal complexity. In a list of eight increasingly complex lines of iambic pentameter,

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[107] Seymour Chatman, 'Comparing Metrical Styles', in *In Style and Language*, ed. by Thomas Sebeok (Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press, 1960), pp. 149-72 (modified and reprinted in *Essays on the Language of Literature*, ed. by Seymour Chatman and Samuel R. Levin (Boston, Massachusetts: Houghton Mifflin, 1967), pp. 132-55 (141).

Attridge lists a line with demotion as early as third, only after lines with an inverted first foot and a line with promotion. From the work of Chatman and Attridge, it is clear that demotions that create one-syllable dips are both minimally disruptive and extremely common in iambic pentameter.

Demotions in predominantly iambic pentameter verse also can produce two-syllable dips, as in the following verse. In this line, the template includes an inverted first foot.

Hope humbly then; with trembling pinions soar;

S o O S o S o S o S

Wait the great teacher, Death, and God adore

Alexander Pope, *Essay on Man*, 3.15-16

The pattern SoOS results from demotion of *great*. In other situations, the pattern SOoS can result, though it is rarer. This rareness stems in part from the fact that the pattern SOoS at the beginning of the line can often be scanned OSoS instead, as in:

Shall I compare thee to a summer's day?

Thou art more lovely and more temperate;

O S o S o S o S o S

Rough winds do shake the darling buds of May,

Shakespeare, *Sonnet 18*.1-3

This verse admits of a line-initial SOoS:

They shift the moving Toyshop of their Heart;

Where Wigs with Wigs, with Sword-knots Sword-knots strive,

S O o S o S o S o S

Beaus banish Beaus, and Coaches Coaches drive

Alexander Pope, *The Rape of the Lock*, 1.100-102

In template meters, demotions that produce one-syllable dips are common. Even in template meters of predominately alternating metrically stressed and unstressed syllables, two-syllable dips occur. This situation provides a model for how demotions work, and theories of demotion in Middle English alliterative verse can be measured against it.

The rhythmic effect and the frequency of two-syllable dips produced by demotion relates to Middle English alliterative metrics in two ways. First, the acceptable rhythmic disruption that such dips produce accounts for their occurrence in Middle English alliterative b-verses that get demoted from oSoSSo to oSoOSo. In Chatman's model of kinds of variation, such demotions are categorized as rhythmically more acceptable and more common than fully ametrical patterns. Their status as more rhythmically turbulent than demotions that produce only one-syllable dips is important. It accounts for the relative infrequency of demotions that produce two-syllable dips in both iambic pentameter and Middle English alliterative b-verses.

Other factors, aside from the legitimacy in template meters of demotions to SoOS, support b-verse demotion. Almost all b-verse demotions come in the middle of the verse, after the first beat. It is not in the first or second syllable of the verse that the reader encounters a syllable that must be adjusted, as Inoue and Stokes would propose for verses like C.132a above. Instead, the poet almost always embeds the syllable, placing it amongst a

couple of syllables on either side. It is almost always after the reader has had a chance to discover the type of the b-verse when the need for demotion arises.[108]

Although demotions can be purely perceptual rather than actually acoustic, the *Gawain*-poet seems to have given the reader ample notice of the metrical need for demotion. The patterns of syllables tip off the first-time reader to the need for demotion, thereby apprising the reader of options in performance. Consider all of the examples of b-verse demotion. The demoted syllable usually occurs at what we might consider a point in the verse where the metrical template is most prominent: Since it occurs where the reader would be expecting a multisyllabic dip, it is easy for the reader to identify the candidate for ictus as demotable.[109]

o S o O S o

As be **h**onest **v**twyth and **i**nwith **a**lle fylþe**ȝ**

'So as to be honest on the outside but [have] all impurities within'

C.14

[108] What follows is a left-to-right account of the motivation for demotion. See Cable, *English*, pp. 23-4, for a model of a right-to-left procedure in the context of Old English alliterative poetry.

[109] Karl Luick, 'Die Englische Stabreimzeile in XIV., XV. und XVI. Jahrhundert', *Anglia,* 9 (1889), pp. 392-443, 553-618 (562), handles apparent x/x//x b-verses by emending. For example, *Alisaunder of Macedoine* 741 *Whan hee in his lykyng þat Ladie lauht had[de]* becomes *Whan lauht in his lykyng þat Ladie he had[de].* The original line comes from *The Romance of William of Palerne*, ed. by Walter W. Skeat, Version 16 March 2012, *Literature Online* (Chadwyck-Healey, 1992 [1867]), Web, accessed 15 April 2012, <http://lion.chadwyck.com/>.

o S o O S o

For what vrþly haþel þat hyȝ honour haldeȝ

'For what earthly man who holds high honor'

C.35

o S o O So

Þat made þe mukel mangerye to marie his here dere

'Who arranged the great banquet to marry his beloved heir'

C.52

o S o O S o

For þe fyrste felonye þe falce fende wroȝt

'At the start, the false fiend committed treachery'

C.205

o S o O S o

Ne neuer wolde for wylnesful his worþy God knawe

'Nor would [he] ever, because of obstinacy acknowledge his noble God'

C.231

o S o O S o

Þer watȝ malys mercyles and mawgre much scheued

'There was merciless severity and much displeasure shown'

C.250

o S o O S o

Sem soþly þat **o**n þat o**þ**er **hy3**t Cam

'Sem [was] truly the first, the other was named Cham'

C.299

o S o O S o

Alle þat **g**lyde3 and **g**ot3 and **g**ost of lyf habbe3

'All that comes and goes and has spirit of life'

C.325

o S o O S o[110]

Summe **s**wymmed þeron þat **s**aue hem**s**elf trawed

'Some who hoped to save themselves swam in it.'

C.388

o S o O S o

Hym a3tsum in þat **a**rk **a**s a**þ**el God lyked

'Him, as one of the eight in that ark as [the] noble God desired'

C.411

o S o O S o

Withouten **m**ast o**þ**er **m**yke o**þ**er **m**yry bawelyne

'Without mast, or boom support or favorable bowline'

C.417[111]

[110] As Chapter One explains, words in *-self* count as Tier II words, so when they alliterate they count, before template considerations, as candidates for beats.

o S o O S o

Gederen to þe **g**yde-ropes þe **g**rete cloþ falles

'[And] pull at the guy ropes, the great cloth unfurls'

P.105

o S o O S o

Of þe **l**enþe of Noe **l**yf to **l**ay a **l**el date

'concerning the length of Noah's life to set a correct date'

C.425

o S o O S o

Bot he wat3 **s**okored by þat **s**yre þat **s**yttes **s**o hi3e

'However, he was aided by that **L**ord who sits so high'

P.261

o S O o S o[112]

And þay bi**g**nne to be **g**lad þat **g**od drink haden

'And they who had good [drinker] began to be glad'

C.123

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[111] *Oþer* (meaning 'or') occurs as a monosyllable in *Pearl*. Nicolay Yakovlev, 'On Final -e in the B-Verses of *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*', in *Approaches to the Metres of Alliterative Verse*, ed. by Judith Jefferson and Ad Putter, Leeds Texts and Monographs, New Series, 17 (Leeds: School of English, University of Leeds, 2009), pp. 135-57 (138), and Yakovlev, *Development*, p. 35.

[112] This scansion assumes translation of *drink* as 'drinker'. The historical form of this word (< OE *drinca*) had two syllables, so the word is scanned with two syllables here. Hiatus between the second syllable of the word and the *h* in *haden* supplies the second syllable of the metrically necessary multisyllabic dip.

o S O o S o

Þe **g**ome watȝ vn**g**arnyst with **g**od men to dele

'The man was unprepared to associate with good men'

C.137

o S O o S o

For þou in **r**eysoun hatȝ **r**engned and ry**ȝ**twys ben euer

'Because you have reigned with reason and have always been righteous'

C.328

o S O o S o

And þere as **p**ouert en**p**resses þaȝ mon **p**yne þynk

'And while poverty [of spirit] oppresses though man may think [his] grief'

P.43

o S O o S o

Þaȝ he were **s**oȝt from **S**amarye þat God **s**eȝ no fyrre

'if he had gone away from Samaria that God would see no farther'

P.116

o S O o S o

Nylt þou **n**euer to **N**uniue bi **n**o kynneȝ wayeȝ

'Will you never [go] to Ninive by roads of any kind'

P.346

o S O o S o

On to þrenge þer-þurȝe watȝ þre dayes dede

'Merely to move through it was [a] deed of three days'

P.354

o S o O o S o

Hurled to þe halle dore and harde þeroute schowued

'Hurled to the hall-door and shoved firmly thereout'

C.44

S o O o S o

Fylter fenden folk forty dayeȝ lencþe

'Fiendish folk pressed together forty days in length'

C.224

o S o O o S o

Hope ȝe þat he heres not þat eres alle made

'Think you that he hears not who made all ears'

P.123

o S o O o S o

Þe abyt þat þou hatȝ vpon no halyday hit menskeȝ

'The clothing that you have on honors no festival'

C.141

The strings of words in the following verses have similar inferred patterns of accentuation—a few syllables with little prominence amidst three syllables that could readily bear linguistic accent. These next verses differ from the ones above, though, in their alliterative schemes. In the list above, the first candidate for ictus in each verse bears its long line's alliterating stave; thus, each of those verses retains a beat on an alliterating syllable even after demotion. In the following verses, none of the verses' first candidates for ictus alliterate. In some ways, these first candidates are better candidates for demotion than the second candidates, which in each of the three cases is an alliterating noun. It seems more likely, however, that the second candidates for ictus would be demoted since they occur in the middle of the verse, in the midst of the rhythm as it were. Such a treatment additionally would match the rhythmic precedent set by the many examples of mid-verse demotion above.

o S o O S o

I schal wysse yow þer-wyth as holy wryt telles

'I shall inform you forthwith as Holy Scripture tells [it]'

P.60

o S o O S o

Hit were a wonder to wene ȝif holy wryt nere

'It would be a marvel to believe if Holy Scripture were not [in existence]'

P.244

S O o S o

Þe see sou3ed ful sore gret selly to here

'The sea moaned very deeply, [a] great marvel to hear'

P.140

To this point, all examples of b-verse demotion have involved demotions of linguistically accented syllables that were running up against immediate metrical requirements. In C.14b (above), for example, treating the second candidate for ictus, *alle*, as metrically stressed would produce the metrical pattern oSoS.... B-verse meter simply does not allow any b-verse to begin with this pattern. The same situation prevails in every crowded b-verse example cited so far in this chapter. Without demoting the second candidate for ictus in P.140b, *selly*, the verse's opening metrical pattern would be SS..., which also is prohibited. In the following verses, the situation is different: Without demotion, the opening patterns would be SooS... or oSooS..., perfectly acceptable patterns at the beginning of the b-verse. Under these conditions, the reader may experience the need for demotion differently. There may not be as much of a sense 'in real time' of the need for demotion, and the reader may not have adequate notice of this need to be able to adjust the actual acoustic realization of the syllable. The demotion occurs nevertheless, and its reality may be primarily a perceptual one.

S o o O S o

Hit weren not alle on **w**yue3 sune3 **w**onen with on fader

'They were not all one [kind of] wife's sons conceived by one [kind of] father' C.112

o S oo O S o

So fro **h**euen to **h**elle þat **h**atel schor laste

'Thus from heaven to hell did that deadly shower extend'

C.227

o S oo O s o

Enter **i**n þenn, quoþ he and **h**af þi wyf with þe

'Enter in then, said he, [and] take your wife with you'

C.349

o S o o O S o

By **f**orty daye3 wern **f**aren on **f**olde no **f**lesch styryed

'When forty days had passed no creature stirred on earth'

C.403

C.112b may actually be less exceptional than the other three verses here. Treatment of *on* as an article rather than an adjective would make *on* metrically unstressed by default and render the verse standard and normal rather than crowded and exceptional.

The final two examples of b-verse demotion are extremely unusual. They require a departure from the convention documented above of demoting a b-verse's second rather than first candidate for ictus. In comparison to second candidates, the first candidates for

ictus in the following verses have extremely weak claims to priority treatment as metrically stressed syllables. Rather than calling into question the established convention of retaining verses' first-occurring candidates for ictus, though, the verses call into question the grammatical status of the words that clearly would not receive metrical stress. Since these words, *dame* and *þe*, fit loosely into the word categories of noun and adverb, they qualify in this study for consideration as candidates for ictus. It may be, however, that the looseness of association with the word categories actually makes these words metrical peers of function words. In that case, these two b-verses would stand not as examples of verses with demotion but as standard b-verses with only two candidates for ictus.

O S o o o S o

Dame **P**ouert, dame **P**itee dame **P**enaunce þe þrydde

'Dame Poverty [of Spirit], Dame Pity, Dame Penance, the third'

P.31

O S o o S o

And quo for **þ**ro may no3t **þ**ole **þ**e **þ**ikker he sufferes

'And who, because of impatience, cannot endure [so much], the deeper he suffers'

P.6

A rule that treats *dame* as a closed-class word (metrically and syntactically akin to an article) would account for the pattern in P.31b, though this approach would have to contend with related issues, such as occurrences of the word elsewhere in the corpus and the status of

similar words such as *sir*.[113] In P.6b *þe* is an adverb meaning 'so much the'; its derivation from a function word, the instrumental form of the OE pronoun *se, sēo, þæt*, supports treatment of it here as a metrically unstressed syllable.

By examining all of the examples of b-verse demotion in the corpus, this chapter demonstrates that this metrical process occurs only under extremely well-defined circumstances. Although there are external influences on the b-verse, such as the principle of metrical differentiation from the a-verse, it is the metrical template that is most directly responsible for demotions. For many readers, it will be no revelation that crowded b-verses ought to be treated as two-beat verses; many metrists already scan them that way. The important payoff for the present chapter is the clarification of the process. This clarification improves our understanding of the b-verse, but the crucial effect of the account is that any use of the b-verse to explain phenomena in the a-verse will be assisted and bound by the explanation given above. The argument in Chapter Three for the legitimacy of three-beat a-verses will rely on this account.

[113] Regarding terms of address, Quirk *et al.*, *Comprehensive*, p. 775, para. 3, explain, 'Most vocatives that are realized by unmodified common nouns... are syntactically different from the same nouns in other functions in that they do not require a determiner.' Omission of the determiner suggests that a vocative such as P.31b's *dame* may carry the properties of a determiner (i.e., article).

Chapter Three: Rhythmic Consistency in the Middle English Alliterative Long Line

Current controversies in Middle English alliterative metrics tie in with both the previous chapter's account of b-verse demotion and an issue that stoked contention amongst prosodists in the second half of the twentieth century. The common ground concerns the number of beats in the line. Northrop Frye in 'Lexis and Melos' and Morris Halle and Samuel Jay Keyser in 'Chaucer and the Study of Prosody', among others, settle for fewer than five metrical stresses per iambic pentameter line.[114] In 'The Rule and the Norm: Halle and Keyser on Chaucer's Meter', Wimsatt addresses the threat presented by these studies to the steady count of five metrical stresses per line.[115] The question is whether iambic pentameter always has the five metrical stresses that 'penta-' suggests. Here are sample scansions from Frye and from Halle and Keyser along with how Wimsatt would have scanned them:

To be, or not to be: that is the question:

Whether 'tis nobler in the mind to suffer

/ / / / [Frye]

/ / / / / [Wimsatt]

The slings and arrows of outrageous fortune,

[114] See Herman Northrop Frye, 'Lexis and Melos', in *Sound and Poetry: English Institute Essays, 1956*, ed. by Herman Northrop Frye (New York: Columbia University Press, 1957), pp. ix-xxvii (xvii). See also Morris Halle and Samuel Jay Keyser, 'Chaucer and the Study of Prosody', *College English,* 28 (1966), pp. 187-219 (199).

[115] William K. Wimsatt, 'The Rule and the Norm: Halle and Keyser on Chaucer's Meter', *College English,* 31 (1970), pp. 774-88.

Or to take arms against a sea of troubles

Shakespeare, *The Tragical History of Hamlet, Prince of Denmark*, III.i.56-9 (1600)

Whan that Aprill with his shoures soote

/ / / [Halle and Keyser]

/ / / / / [Wimsatt]

The droghte of March hath perced to the roote

Chaucer, CT.'General Prologue'.1-2 (1386-1400)[116]

Multiple mid-twentieth century studies propose shaving metrical stresses away from lines of iambic pentameter in this way. Wimsatt and others found themselves defending what many readers consider obvious about the line—its five metrical stresses. The connection to Middle English alliterative metrics is that now a cadre of metrists would subject the Middle English long line to similar misrepresentation by inappropriately restricting its beat-count.

In an effort to resolve this matter, this chapter explores the metrical structure of the a-verse from several different angles. It takes as a starting point debates that twentieth-century metrists had about the structure of iambic pentameter poetry. Understanding connections and differences between current issues and earlier debates can help lay a foundation for a principled explanation of Middle English alliterative verse. Using this framework as a guide, the chapter critiques prevailing theories that go wrong in a few different ways, most notably in their counts of only two beats in every a-verse. The rest of the chapter makes occasional reference to this critique but concerns itself more with the

[116] The date comes from the chronology in Chaucer, *Riverside*, ed. by Benson, p. xxix.

merits of a theory that allows for three beats in the a-verse. A section on rhythmic coherence makes an argument based on theory for the importance of retaining beats in the a-verse. That section includes an explanation of how the Chapter Two account of b-verse demotion makes all arguments for a-verse demotion untenable.

The argument for the legitimacy of three-beat a-verses continues with a statistical analysis of the scansions that result from this approach. The analysis demonstrates a number of consistencies between the a-verse that allows for three beats and the b-verse; from the analysis also emerge several problems with any theory that limits the a-verse to two beats. The chapter's closing section presents some line-wide observations that reinforce the argument that rhythmic consistency in the long line depends on having a-verses with more than two beats.

'METRICAL STRESSES DISAPPEAR BY THE DOZEN'[117]

As Wimsatt explains, there was much that the opponents of a consistently five-beat line had right. The linguistic, as distinct from the metrical, observations of Halle and Keyser mostly withstand scrutiny—indeed, often provide insight. The problem with Halle and Keyser's theory is its erroneous conflation of linguistic and metrical prominence. They spend much of their argument discussing the occurrence of 'stress maxima' (heavy linguistic accents flanked by two unaccented syllables in the same verse) in the typically strong positions in the metrical template.[118] In doing so, they neglect the metrical prominence of

[117] Wimsatt, 'The Rule', p. 778.
[118] See Halle and Keyser, 'Chaucer', p. 197, for a definition of 'stress maximum'. In this phrase, 'stress' refers to what the present study refers to as linguistic accent.

other words, such as the word *to* in the example from line 2 of *The Canterbury Tales* above. Frye similarly counts fewer than five metrical stresses in iambic pentameter lines. He writes,

> The general principle involved here is that when iambic pentameter is moving fairly fast, four-stress lines predominate. In the period of the stopped couplet the rhythm is slower and there are fewer four-stress lines, but they are still very frequent, and come back with any variation of the meter....[119]

Wimsatt refutes these scholars by showing that there are five metrical stresses in the iambic pentameter line.

The connections between that debate and the current one on Middle English alliterative verse go deeper than the shared disagreement over 'five beats or fewer'. At first glance, the debate in Middle English alliterative metrics may seem more complicated. Middle English alliterative verse's lack of an unchanging template like iambic pentameter's x/x/x/x/x/ might seem to make logic in this realm hazier. Suspending template logic in the a-verse actually brings clarity, though. What has complicated the Middle English alliterative metrics debate is a misguided reliance on principles stemming from template metrics at the expense of the more relevant principles. Just as some metrists in the iambic pentameter debate want to overlook basic elements of the tradition—such as the seeming impossibility of reading Shakespeare without sensing the five beats per verse—some Middle English alliterative metrists are overlooking basic principles.

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[119] Frye, 'Lexis and Melos', p. xviii.

Recasting template logic and its corollaries as relatively minor players in Middle English alliterative metrics brings clarity to the discussion of beat-counts. The only reason that the template was Wimsatt's most valuable piece of evidence in discussing iambic pentameter is that he was working in a meter acknowledged by all to be based on a regular template. Determination of metrical stress in Middle English alliterative verse is based on other key principles, primarily the grammatical hierarchy, as outlined in Chapter One, and alliteration. An explanation of Middle English alliterative meter that does not have the grammatical hierarchy at the center holds as little promise as an explanation of iambic pentameter that neglects the x/x/x/x/x/ template. The few exceptions to this fact, such as the three dozen b-verse demotions addressed in Chapter Two, emerge infrequently and only in highly specific environments.

PROBLEMS WITH LIMITING THE A-VERSE TO TWO BEATS

Touting the primacy of an unchanging count of two beats in the a-verse, as some metrists unfortunately continue to do, often entails bold neglect of the indisputable primacy of the grammatical hierarchy and alliteration. Inoue provides this troubling scansion:

* / /

Bolde **b**urne, on þis **b**ent **b**e not so gryndel[120]

'Bold man, be not so fierce on this field'

SGGK.2338

[120] A discussion of this verse appears in Inoue, *A-Verse*, pp. 77-78. Inoue's scansion indicates positions of the beats but not offbeats.

Inoue properly acknowledges that alliteration in *burne* is a cue to metrical stress: "Since alliteration thus makes the word metrically prominent, I take the first [metrical] stress to fall on *burne*, and... *bolde* to be stress-subordinated and absorbed into the opening [metrically] unstressed pre-head'. She suspends this logic when considering 'bolde'. Alliteration and the hierarchy of grammatical categories ought not be cast aside so readily, especially since what is systematic about Middle English alliterative meter becomes manifest directly through acknowledgment of these concepts.

In contrast to Inoue and Stokes' theory, Putter, Jefferson, and Stokes' theory properly gives priority to alliteration. The importance of alliteration in medieval English poetry supports such a view. It is improbable that alliteration would have become so unimportant so quickly as to be available for demotion as frequently as Inoue and Stokes have it. When there are no pressing reasons to scan otherwise, it is sensible for syllables that are 1) alliterating; 2) in open-class words; and 3) their words' primarily accented syllables to get beats, as in the following examples:

x / x / x x / x

Ne **s**uppe on **s**ope of my **s**eve þaȝ þay **s**welt schulde

'Nor swallow one sop of my stew even if they should perish'

C.108

x / x / x x x / x[121]

And felle fettere3 to his fete festene3 bylyue

'And quickly fasten cruel fetters to his feet'

C.156

/ x x x / x / x

Dry3tyn with his dere dom hym drof to þe abyme

'God, with his severe judgment drove him into the abyss'

C.214

In addition to unbending regard for the grammatical hierarchy and alliteration, a theory of Middle English alliterative meter must meet a standard of 'internal cohesion of the rules'. Yakovlev advocates for such a standard:

> Preferably, different rules within the theory should be related, e.g. by operating for and in terms of similar kinds of linguistic units, or by being applicable in a similar way in different contexts.[122]

Founding a meter on grammatical hierarchy and alliteration and then sacrificing these cues to produce an 'ideal' number of beats per verse would produce poetry that fails the test of internal cohesion. Additionally, a theory that adheres to a single set of technical assumptions in both half-lines about phenomena like the presence of historical final *-e* and elision will withstand scrutiny better than one that does not. Compliance of scansions with other known metrical constraints also is an important measure of a theory's validity. The

[121] Although ten Brink, *Chaucers*, pp. 181-7, allows elision of weak *-e* before *h-* and of weak *-o* before vowels, he says nothing about elision of weak *-o* before *h-*. C.156a *to his*, therefore, counts as two syllables.
[122] Yakovlev, *Development*, p. 30.

strength of the theory presented in this dissertation derives from the fact that it meets all of these criteria.

Another perspective, admittedly more impressionistic and subjective, but based on spoken recitation of thousands of long lines, shows that Inoue and Stokes' demotions of ictus candidates in the a-verse result in odd rhythms. The proposed scansions can leave the reader trying to squeeze semantically important, alliterating syllables with full vowels (rather than reduced vowels) into groups made up otherwise of non-alliterating function words and inflections. Additionally, Inoue's appeal to symmetry in beat counts per verse also neglects findings of the last thirty years and long line properties detailed in Chapter Two. The extensive record of scholarship in the field suggests that a key feature of rhythmic uniformity in the poetry is consistency in the counts of metrically unstressed, rather than metrically stressed syllables.

Inoue's Spacing Rule requires sequences of two or more syllables between beats. Inoue and Stokes provide the following summary of the rule:

> The presence of a [multisyllabic] dip between the second word [ictus candidate] and the caesural [metrical] stress will confirm that those are the two places where the beat should fall; only very rarely will the absence of such a [multisyllabic] dip dictate that [metrical] stress should instead fall on the first (not the second) word and the caesural word.[123]

[123] Inoue and Stokes, 'Caesura', p. 5. They call multisyllabic dips 'long dips'.

The first part of the Spacing Rule calls for scansions like these, with demotion of the first ictus candidate in each crowded a-verse:[124]

* / / [Spacing Rule]

A **l**ittel **l**ut with þe hede þe **l**ere he discouerez

'Bowed a little with the head; he reveals the flesh'

SGGK.418

* / / [Spacing Rule]

Gauan **g**ripped to his ax and **g**ederes hit on hy3t

'Gawain gripped onto his axe and raises it aloft'

SGGK.421

The first half of the rule does not apply to the following verses since in each verse the dip between the second and third ictus candidates is short rather than multisyllabic. This is the 'absence of a [multisyllabic] dip' case that the rule mentions.

x x / x / / x x x

* / / [Inoue and Stokes]

And a **w**yndow **w**yd vponande **w**ro3t vpon lofte

'And a wide window to be opened made on top'

C.318

[124] In place of the term 'demotion', Inoue and Stokes often use the term 'stress-subordination'. Whatever the term, the phenomenon denoted is the treatment of a syllable with inferred linguistic accent as metrically unstressed. Also, a 'crowded' a-verse is one that has more than the normal two candidates for metrical stress.

x / / x / x x

/ / [Inoue and Stokes]

In **d**ry3 **d**red and **d**aunger þat **d**urst **d**o non oþer

'With enduring awe and submission he who dared do nothing else'

C.342

In each of these verses, the Spacing Rule calls for the middle of the three potential beats—the adjective *wyd* and the noun *dred*—to be stress-subordinated. Many more verses in addition to these two lack a multisyllabic dip between the second and third ictus candidates. This abundance makes the part of the Spacing Rule that follows the semicolon important, but that part of the rule is ambiguous. It could mean:

> On occasion the absence of a multisyllabic dip requires stress-subordination of the second ictus candidate, but, usually, the absence of a multisyllabic dip introduces no such requirement.

More likely, Inoue and Stokes mean:

> The absence of a multisyllabic dip between the second and third ictus candidates occurs only rarely but always dictates that metrical stress should instead fall on the first (not the second) ictus candidate and the caesural ictus candidate.

Contrary to the latter formulation's suggestion that second and third ictus candidates rarely occur close to each other in crowded a-verses, these syllables often do occur within one metrically unstressed syllable of each other. They are quite common. About two in five crowded a-verses are configured thus:

x / x x x / x / x

Towalten alle þyse welle-hedeȝ and þe water flowed

'All these fountainheads broke open and the water flowed'

C.428

x / x x x / /x

Hit saȝtled on a softe day synkande to grounde

'It settled on a calm day sinking to [the] ground'

C.445

/ x x x / x / x

Falleȝ on þe foule flesch and fylleȝ his wombe

'Falls on the foul flesh and fills his paunch'

C.462

In fact, here such demotion would produce implausibly long dips, though Inoue and Stokes would handle these verses as exceptions to the Spacing Rule.

Inoue and Stokes sometimes handle such verses by counting the second and third ictus candidates as one lexical item.

* / / [Inoue and Stokes][125]

Þat þe bit of þe broun stel bot on þe grounde

'Since the cutting edge of the shiny steel pierced into the ground'

SGGK.426

[125] Inoue and Stokes, 'Caesura', provide scansions of SGGK.426a and SGGK.2446a on p. 4 and of SGGK.633a at p. 4 n. 13.

* / / [Inoue and Stokes]

Gawan watz for **g**ode knawen and as **g**olde pured

'Gawain was recognized before God, and like refined gold'

SGGK.633

* / / [Inoue and Stokes]

Þurh **my**ȝt of **M**orgne la Faye þat in **m**y hous lenges

'Through [the] power of Morgan le Fay, who dwells in my house'

SGGK.2446

Inoue and Stokes argue that the third ictus candidate can be metrically demoted if

> the verse-final lexical item is so closely syntactically linked to the preceding one as to form a continuant of it equivalent to the [linguistically unaccented] syllables succeeding the [linguistically accented] (root) syllable of a word—— as with the second element of an adjective + noun combination...; the second element of a verb + simple adverb...; an auxiliary verb following the main verb...; a pronominal object after a transitive verb...; a pronominal vocative.[126]

Their observation in the first part of the Spacing Rule that crowded a-verses' second and third ictus candidates often have at least two metrically unstressed syllables of separation from each other is correct. Often, though, that multisyllabic dip is not there and demoting the second or third ictus candidate seems more sensible to them. Nothing, however, about

[126] Inoue and Stokes, 'Caesura', p. 4.

any of these scenarios strikes one as carefully crafted by the poet to ensure some special environment, much less an environment that would necessitate metrical demotion.

Demotion is a phenomenon familiar to readers of iambic pentameter. As such, readers might tend to forget that it often transgresses English phonology. Only particular situations can justify such a transgression—the rare situation in which the rhythmic payoff of such transgression outweighs other linguistic givens. In the context of accentual-syllabic meter, the template is the justification. It is a highly constrained environment with prescriptions for every syllable in the line. The poet exercised freedom in composing, but the reader is beholden to the template. The template has the strength garnered from hundreds of lines of instantiation. When a linguistic given conflicts with expectation of an offbeat, demotion results.

There are many reasons why demotion in iambic pentameter sets no precedent for the type of process that the Spacing Rule implies. First, demotion is a transgression of English phonology, but all of the infrastructure for justifying demotion falls to the ground in the context of the a-verse. The conflict between linguistic givens and template—a prerequisite for demotion—is absent because the poet has placed accented syllables in metrically strong positions and unaccented syllables in metrically weak positions.

Demotion is something about which a reader of hundreds of lines of verse develops an intuition. It is difficult to accept that there is anything intuitive about demotion in, for example, the crowded verse C.132a, the second a-verse in this passage:

/ x x x x / x x x / x x / x

Solased hem with **s**emblaunt and **s**yled fyrre

/ x / x x / x x / x x / x

Tron fro table to table and talkede ay myrþe

'Cheered them with [his] hospitality, and passed on further,

Stepped from table to table, and always talked with delight'

C.131-2

Inoue and Stokes' forbidden single-offbeat dip occurs between the first and second ictus candidates in C.132a. One assumes that Inoue and Stokes would demote the first ictus candidate of the verse, *tron*. Because the a-verse of the preceding line begins with a beat, though, demoting it cannot come 'intuitively' to the reader; moreover, since standard a-verses in the corpus have 55 different metrical patterns, xx/xx/x does not leap out as an obvious alternative to the three-beat pattern.

Rather than as a phenomenon that flows naturally from the meter and the rhythm, Inoue and Stokes present demotion as subservient to a constraint with neither phonological nor statistical support. The theory suspends salient features of the verse. The two-beat rule is only superficially neat. The fact is that demotion can only be the unavoidable consequence of placing rhythmically modulated verses in a context where they differ from a clear template.

No argumentation can instill in a reader the rhythmic mindset that develops while reading aloud hundreds of verses written in a meter. Attridge has called this mindset the 'metrical set'.[127] The acceptability of demotion depends heavily on this mindset. Even a few

[127] Derek Attridge, *The Rhythms of English Poetry*, English Language Series, 14 (London and New York: Longman, 1982), p. 158.

lines of context can make the point clear. Consider the likelihood of demoting the second beat of the final b-verse here:

x / x x / x / x / x x / x

ȝet **h**ym **i**s þe **h**yȝe kyng **h**arder in **h**euen

x / x / x x x / x x x / x / x

As **M**aþew **m**eleȝ in his **m**asse of þat **m**an ryche

x x x / x / x x x / x x / x

Þat **m**ade þe **m**ukel **m**angerye to **m**arie his here dere

'The high King is yet with him more firm in this situation indeed

As Matthew tells in his mass-gospel about that wealthy man

Who arranged the great banquet to marry his beloved heir'

C.50-52

In the context of deductive meter, demonstration of such demotion is difficult enough because one needs to show the rhythmic reality of the demoted syllable. The reader needs to be able to experience the resulting offbeat. In the context of inductive meter, proving the demotion is all the more difficult. A theory of a metrical framework requires strong support from an account grounded in principles of rhythm; otherwise, the framework's ramifications amount to just an internally consistent system with weak ties to phonology. In this case, rhythmic principles support treatment of ictus candidates as metrical stresses.

Another consideration casts further doubt on the argument of Inoue and Stokes. They present certain patterns as surprising facts when in fact those patterns are logically

unavoidable. Specifically, when demotion of an ictus candidate would result in a short string of metrically unstressed syllables, they think of it as confirmation of the acceptability of demotion. According to the definition of 'short string of metrically unstressed syllables', though, and according to other parameters inherent in the verse, it would be quite extraordinary, and in some cases entirely impossible, to come across verses that did not match their criteria. Their environments for demotion are not more common than one would expect, but actually totally unavoidable according to considerations of pure logic.

Consider the crowded a-verses whose three-beat scansions have no extra-long (of four or more syllables) dips. (Let us set aside for now crowded a-verses that seem to have extra-long dips even when scanned with three beats.) Effectively, for Inoue and Stokes a key determinant of an ictus candidate's eligibility for demotion is the combined length of the two dips immediately adjacent to it. According to Inoue and Stokes, if the combined length of those dips is two or fewer syllables then the ictus candidate (which the present study will call 'crammed') can be stress-subordinated. Inoue and Stokes consider it a surprising fact that crowded a-verses usually have at least one crammed possible ictus position. They make it sound like the poet has composed crowded a-verses only of the sort with at least one crammed possible ictus positions and that the poet has suspiciously avoided verses with no crammed possible ictus positions.

Rather than metrical constraint, though, it is strict logic that makes necessary much of what Inoue and Stokes observe. Consider, for example, all hypothetically possible patterns of verses with 1) eight or fewer total syllables; 2) three possible ictus positions; and 3) no extra-long dips in the three-beat scansion (as assumed above). There are 106 such

patterns (xxx/xx//, xxx/x/x/, etc.). All 106 of these patterns have at least one crammed possible ictus position. In other words, it is not just unmetrical, but impossible to write a verse that has eight or fewer total syllables and three or more possible ictus positions without having at least one crammed possible ictus position. A large proportion of Inoue and Stokes' examples of crammed possible ictus positions come from verses with eight or fewer syllables—verses where simple math makes crammed possible ictus positions absolutely unavoidable.

To further our investigation of the unavoidability of the environment that Inoue and Stokes interpret as evidence of demotion, let us turn to the longer crowded a-verses, of nine or more syllables, where hypothetically there is enough room for non-crammed possible ictus positions, as in /xxx//xxx. Note that demotion of any of the three ictus candidates in this example, apart from all of the other problems with a-verse demotion, would create inordinately long dips. Of the 84 hypothetically possible verses with nine syllables and three possible ictus positions (xxxxxx///, xxxxx/x//, etc.), 40 have extra-long dips no matter the treatment of the three possible ictus positions. Thus, the two patterns just mentioned (xxxxxx/// and xxxxx/x//) plus many others may not help us decide whether the two-beat theory works better than a theory that retains all beats in the a-verse; under either theory, these patterns are problematic. Of the 44 remaining hypothetically possible patterns with nine total syllables and three possible ictus positions, most have at least one crammed possible ictus position (in xxx/xxx//, the final position; in xxx/xx/x/, also the final position; etc.). Ten do not have any crammed possible ictus positions:

/xxx//xxx	x/xx/x/xx	x/xx/xxx/	xxx//xxx/	x/xx/xx/x
/xxx/x/xx	/xxx/xxx/	xx/x/xxx/	/xxx/xx/x	xx/x/xx/x

In other words, each of these ten patterns relies on all three of its possible ictus positions to avoid extra-long dips (dips of four or more syllables). Stress-subordination of any of the possible ictus positions would produce an extra-long dip. As discussed above, for eight (or fewer)-syllable verses the 'ratio' of patterns with crammed possible ictus positions to patterns without crammed possible ictus positions is 106-to-0. For nine-syllable verses, the ratio remains high at 34-to-10, or about 3-to-1. This ratio means that in nine-syllable verses the poet might be more likely, if not utterly forced, to pick patterns with crammed possible ictus positions than to pick patterns without them. Any statistical favoring amongst nine syllable verses of verses with 1) three possible ictus positions and 2) a crammed possible ictus position should not surprise us.

The ratio 3-to-1 can serve as a benchmark against which to compare the profile of verses with nine syllables total and three possible ictus positions. In such a comparison, a ratio significantly higher than 3-to-1 would support Inoue and Stokes' argument. In that case, it would seem that the poet went out of his way to satisfy the conditions that Inoue and Stokes propose for stress-subordination. A ratio significantly lower than 3-to-1 would suggest that the poet showed no preference at all in crowded a-verses for syllables whose demotion would produce acceptable dips. Because of this situation, although a 2-to-1 ratio at first might seem to support Inoue and Stokes, it in fact would indicate a statistically disproportionate frequency of verses without the cramming. A ratio of 2-to-1 would cast further doubt on Inoue and Stokes' argument.

We can apply this same line of reasoning to longer verses, of ten or more total syllables. As the crowded a-verse gets longer, crammed possible ictus positions become less and less likely to occur by chance; thus, a high rate of occurrence of verses with crammed possible ictus positions in, for example, eleven-syllable verses would support Inoue and Stokes' argument. Verses of twelve or more syllables lie, in a sense, at the end of a spectrum: While cramming is unavoidable in eight-syllable verses with three possible ictus positions, it is impossible in verses that have 1) a total of twelve syllables; 2) three possible ictus positions; and 3) no extra-long dips before stress-subordination. Since most of Inoue and Stokes' examples come from shorter verses, though, the argument is damaged by the fact that crammed syllables are nearly unavoidable.

There are other reasons to question Inoue and Stokes' proposal to demote syllables in crowded a-verses. Just as b-verse guidelines for metrical stress (i.e., privileging alliterating Tier I words) should match the a-verse guidelines, there should be some rhythmic consistency across the caesura. There is an undisputed feature of the b-verse that is rare in all English poetry from the beginning of the twelfth century, namely clashing metrical stress. Although clashing metrical stress occurs frequently in the eighth-century *Beowulf* and the eleventh-century *Death of Edward*, its frequency has declined considerably by the early twelfth-century writing of *Durham*, and it is extremely uncommon in *The Grave* (c. 1150), *Soul's Address to the Body* of the Worcester Fragments (c. 1170), and *Brut* (c. 1200).[128] Patterns of dip-beat-dip-beat... grow in frequency after the eleventh century. The question

[128] See Cable, *English*, chap. 2, pp. 41-65, which shows that the absence of clashing metrical stress in English poetry from 1100 makes Middle English alliterative verse more like the tenth-century rhythmic prose of Aelfric and less like classical Old English poetry.

is what bearing the presence of a feature so unusual in the b-verse should have on the interpretation of the a-verse. On the one hand, the scarcity of clashing metrical stress in English poetry after the eleventh century could support Inoue and Stokes' proposal to eliminate clashing metrical stresses in Middle English alliterative a-verses; on the other hand, the indisputable (if arguably anachronistic) presence of clashing metrical stress on the other side of the caesura makes clashing metrical stress in the a-verse seem appropriate.

There are two reasons to favor a line of reasoning that considers the b-verse's clashing metrical stress a strong precedent for conditions in the a-verse. First of all, the b-verse precedent is more immediate than the external, historical trend away from clashing metrical stress. Rhythmic consistency from a-verse to b-verse holds a stronger claim to legitimacy than rhythmic consistency of the a-verse with other Middle English verse traditions. Second, inclusion of clashing metrical stress in the a-verse aligns exactly with a key principle of Middle English alliterative verse. Although this Middle English alliterative a-verse emerges amidst a literary record that was trending toward alternation of beats and dips (rather than the occurrence of adjacent beats), there was an opposite pressure, the pressure to avoid any semblance of alternation of beats and dips of equal length. Chapter Four will elaborate further, but suffice it to say for now that clashing metrical stress offers opportunities for maximal differentiation from even alternation.

Inoue and Stokes' theory leads to multiple inconsistencies. It challenges the importance of the grammatical hierarchy and alliteration in a tradition that values them. The two-beat theory questionably privileges consistency in beat-counts over consistency of counts of metrically unstressed syllables. The two-beat theory also implies inordinately long

dips. Inoue and Stokes also propose demotion without establishing the essential template, and their theory falls short of the standard of internal cohesion. Finally; Inoue and Stokes deprive the a-verse of the clashing metrical stress that connects it rhythmically to the b-verse and that supports the effort to differentiate long line patterns from that of iambic pentameter.

In the b-verse, clashing metrical stress occurs often, as in SGGK.844b. In the first half-line of the same verse, Inoue and Stokes propose demoting *hoge* in order to have only two beats in the a-verse.

x / / x x x / x x x / / x

*x x / x x x / x x x / / x

A **h**oge **h**aþel for þe nonez, and of **h**yghe **e**ldee

'A huge man for the purpose and of mature age'

SGGK.844

Without demotion, the metrical stresses in *hoge haþel*, with elision of the final *-e* in *hoge* before the *h-* of *haþel*, clash. One problem with demoting *hoge* is that it involves eliminating clashing metrical stress on one side of the long line at the same time that there is clashing metrical stress on the other side of the very same long line. Such uneven treatment could be acceptable if there were evidence that clashing metrical stress plays a role in the metrical differentiation of the a-verse and the b-verse (the rigorous differentiation described in Chapter One). There is no such evidence, though.

One potential argument supporting Inoue and Stokes is that the long line can have clashing metrical stress in two-beat verses, but that, in crowded verses, one of the clashing

metrical stresses must be the first casualty. Inoue and Stokes hint at a rhythmic explanation for such a scenario, but go no further in elaborating a principle. They explain that dips 'absorb' third ictus candidates in the a-verse, but such an argument begs the question.[129] Stress absorption (stress-subordination) is often called demotion by Inoue and Stokes, but this mismatch of linguistic accent and metrical stress never occurs in environments like those delineated in Chapter Two above. In order for demotion of a clashing metrical stress to be plausible, the precise mechanism must be elucidated. In the absence of any semblance of the classic environment for demotion, the formidable onus of legitimizing metrical demotion falls to the innovating metrist.

Clashing metrical stress is part of the character of Middle English alliterative verse. This fact is an important point against Inoue's Spacing Rule. There are many ways to show this. One way has to do with the distribution of dips in the b-verse. Under the metrical constraints of the b-verse, the first two dips are either a multisyllabic dip, then a short dip, or vice versa. When the sequence is multisyllabic-short, the poet must choose whether the short dip will have one or zero syllables. In over one third of the cases (over one hundred times), the poet opts for a zero dip (i.e., no syllable at all), thereby creating clashing metrical stress, as, for example, in this verse:

x x x / / x

Mony **r**enischche **r**enke3 and 3et is **r**oum more

'Many lowborn men and still [there] is more room'

C.96

[129] Inoue and Stokes, 'Caesura', pp. 5, 22.

That clashing metrical stress is such a common feature of the b-verse supports the idea that it is an important element of the long line.

More support for retention of clashing metrical stress in crowded a-verses comes from the theory that a-verses cannot have b-verse patterns. In several cases, the a-verse relies on a third beat for differentiation from the b-verse template. In these verses, the scansions resulting from applying the Spacing Rule are given first and the three-beat scansions are given second:

*x / x x x / x [Inoue and Stokes]

/ / x x x / x

Lo, **l**orde, with your **l**eue at your **l**ege heste

'Behold, lord, by your leave at your sovereign behest'

C.94

* x / x x x / x [Inoue and Stokes]

/ / x / x x x

Now **N**oe **n**euer stynte3 þat **n**iy3t he bygynne3

'Now Noah never stops that arduous activity he must undertake'

C.359

*x / x x / x [Inoue and Stokes]

/ / x x / x

Fyrst **f**eng to þe **fl**y3t alle þat **fl**e my3t

'First, all who could flee took to flight.'

C.377

*x / x x / x [Inoue and Stokes]

/ / x x / x

Luf **l**oke3 to **l**uf and his **l**eue take3

'[The] lover looks at [his] beloved and takes his leave'

C.401

*x / x x / x [Inoue and Stokes]

/ / x x / x

Bed **b**lynne of þe rayn hit **b**atede as fast

'[And] ordered ceasing of the rain; it abated just as quickly.'

C.440

*x / x x / x [Inoue and Stokes]

/ / x x / x

Ay **h**ele **o**uer **h**ed **h**ourlande aboute

'Always heel over head whirling about'

P.271

The poet's allowance of line-initial clashing metrical stress also raises the possibility of salvaging this a-verse from an unmetrical x/xxx/x pattern:

*x / x x x / x

/ / x x x / x

Ex**c**use me at þe **c**ourt I may not **c**om þere

'Excuse me at the court. I can not go there'

C.70

The question of clashing metrical stress ties in with a larger question about poetic rhythm and rhythm generally. In all of the discussion of metrical difference and variation, one might begin to lose a sense for the way in which Middle English alliterative poetry coheres. This section of the dissertation explores the nature of the rhythmic coherence of the long line and the extent to which various treatments of crowded a-verses support or defy that coherence.

First, it is important to recognize that the set of all hypothetically possible meters includes both rhythmically coherent and rhythmically incoherent meters. Iambic pentameter provides a clear example of a rhythmically coherent meter. For an example of a rhythmically incoherent meter, consider this hypothetical configuration of beats and offbeats:

x / x / x / / x x / x x

x / x / x / / x x / x x...

Although nothing precludes the composition of English lines that exhibit this pattern, there is a problem with it. This sequence of offbeats and beats lies outside the realm of felicitous metrical variation and calls for continual changes that are counter-rhythmic. Even performing the rhythm with nonsense syllables (i.e., ta-tum-ta-tum-ta-tum tum-ta-ti-tum-ta-ti) for just a couple of lines in a row can be laborious and unsettling. It requires the reader to establish a new mindset at the beginning of each verse. Although poets have great freedom to construct and follow meters, there is no precedent in English poetry for regular, drastic mid-line rhythmic shifts like the hypothetical one above. A metrical theory must

avoid implying such rhythmic incoherence; the theory must meet some minimal standard of rhythmic coherence.

Rhythmic coherence can be quantified. In the above example of a rhythmically incoherent meter, one could support the assertion of rhythmic imbalance by pointing out that the first half-line contains three x/ segments while the second half-line contains zero x/ segments.[130] Similarly, the first half-line contains zero /xx segments while the second half-line contains two /xx segments. These discrepant tallies account empirically for the impression of rhythmic imbalance that the hypothetical meter would entail. Subjecting a corpus of Middle English alliterative verse to similar examination can shed light on the rhythms implied by different theories of its meter. Tallying segments within verses can show whether the a-verse is rhythmically akin to the b-verse and to what extent that affiliation depends on the treatment of crowded a-verses.

Other appeals to some kind of balance between the a-verse and the b-verse have been made before. Inoue and Stokes consider a 'symmetrical' count of two beats per verse a merit; moreover, in her 'New Theory of Alliterative A-Verses', Inoue joins David Lawton in questioning Duggan's suggestion of a difference between the a-verse and the b-verse.[131] Lawton writes, 'It is inherently strange that in [Duggan's] account a-verses and b-verses

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[130] In this chapter the term 'segment' has the generic meaning 'part of a verse' rather than any of the more specialized meanings the word can have in linguistics. Ralph Hanna, III, 'Defining Middle English Alliterative Poetry', in *The Endless Knot: Essays on Old and Middle English in Honor of Marie Borroff*, ed. by M. Teresa Tavormina and R. F. Yeager (Cambridge, UK: D. S. Brewer, 1995), 3, pp. 43-64 (45), in referring to 'a poetic line as comprised of segments ending with either a stressed syllable or the medial caesura' uses the term 'segments' for the partitions that result from his own way of grouping beats and offbeats. The present study examines a few different ways of grouping beats and offbeats, but not Hanna's.

[131] Inoue, 'New', p. 108.

operate differently. According to Duggan, b-verses are syllable-counted and a-verses are not."[132] In reference to this conception of Duggan's theory, Inoue adds, 'It is odd indeed that rules are introduced only at the middle of the line.' Setting aside momentarily the complex question of whether rules actually are introduced at the middle of the line, one can see from the comments of Lawton and of Inoue and Stokes that there is a clear desire amongst some metrists to identify a continuity between the a-verse and the b-verse.

The long line indeed coheres in important ways, but not in the way that Inoue, Stokes, and others contend. In decrying the introduction of rules mid-line, what Inoue and Stokes call for is a metrical symmetry. The problem with this argument is that, if anything, Middle English alliterative verse favors the opposite, namely metrical asymmetry. As outlined in Chapter One, it is becoming the consensus view amongst metrists that the set of patterns acceptable in the a-verse and the set of patterns acceptable in the b-verse are mutually exclusive. In this sense, metrists, including Inoue and Stokes, are already in agreement that 'rules are introduced only at the middle of the line'. More locally, in coming to accept the rule that the first two dips of the b-verse must be 'short then long' or 'long then short', metrists also imply built-in differentiation in lengths of dips at the beginning of the b-verse. An argument for two beats per verse based on metrical symmetry flies in the face of the multiple forms of metrical asymmetry that characterize the long line.

The 'symmetry' that two-beat metrists favor, in addition to conflicting with the poet's predilection for metrical asymmetry, actually neglects the important kinds of agreement that the a-verse and the b-verse do exhibit. Later in this chapter, the empirical comparison

[132] Lawton, 'Idea', p. 158, in Inoue, 'New', p. 108.

of rhythms in the two-beat theory to those in a theory that allows for three beats will identify more precisely the way in which metrical symmetry would unfortunately imply rhythmic inconsistency. There is, moreover, another kind of agreement: Even though metrical patterns on either side of the caesura are different from each other, the technical assumptions that underlie them, about things like final *-e* and elision, must be the same. Whereas allowance for variable beat-counts in the a-verse readily emerges from a regimen of consistent rule-application, the two-beat theory often relies on compromises. The so-called symmetry of the two-beat theory proposes an only artificial agreement between the a-verse and the b-verse while entailing rhythmic imbalance and while abandoning rigorous adherence to a single set of technical assumptions.

LINE-LENGTH CHANGES AS STANDARD VARIATION

Having surveyed questions that arise from two-beat theories of the a-verse, the discussion will now shift to the merits of a theory that allows for three beats in the a-verse. Theoretical support for the three-beat a-verse comes from the premise that rhythmic similarity within the a-verse, between standard and three-beat a-verses, is just as important as rhythmic similarity across the caesura. Some metrists consider the rhythmic relation between standard and three-beat a-verses analogous to the relation between lines of different length in syllable-stress meters. This connection warrants further attention since it provides more theoretical support for the legitimacy of three-beat a-verses.

Metrists have pointed out ways that poets writing in syllable-stress meters vary line lengths without disrupting the flow of their poetry. This variation serves as a model for

similar variation in Middle English alliterative verse. The alexandrine is known as a device for providing rhythmically felicitous variation in iambic pentameter. Chatman addresses the topic in an article on the kinds of metrical variation. He identifies a variety of categories of metrical variation, ranging in rhythmical effect from minimally disruptive to wholly ametrical. He identifies the alexandrine amidst iambic pentameters as rhythmically undisruptive; in fact, he ranks it as less disruptive than modulation like the demotion described in Chapter Two. Among the kinds of 'purely metrical or intrasystemic variation' he describes is 'occasional change in syllable count as the indication of line length (from some traditional norm)'.[133] He gives the last, twelve-syllable line of this passage as an example of 'pure' variation:[134]

> When Ajax strives, some Rocks' vast Weight to throw,
> The Line too labours, and the Words move slow;
> Not so, when swift Camilla scours the Plain,
> Flies o'er th'unbending Corn, and skims along the Main.
>
> Alexander Pope, *Essay on Criticism*.370-73 (1709)[135]

Chatman locates such variation in line length squarely within the realm of stylistic choice. Its effect is acceptable enough that it occurs regularly at the end of the Spenserian stanza. The last lines of a stanza from James Thomson's 'The Castle of Indolence' provide an example:

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[133] Chatman, 'Comparing', p. 141.
[134] Chatman, 'Comparing', p. 142.
[135] Alexander Pope, *The Poems of Alexander Pope*, ed. by John Butt (London: Methuen, 1963), p. 155.

Sees on the naked hill, or valley low,

The whilst in ocean Phoebus dips his wain,

A vast assembly moving to and fro;

Then all at once in air dissolves the wondrous show.

Thomson, 'The Castle of Indolence', 1.30.6-9 (1748)[136]

Ballad meter provides another example of the effect of varied line lengths. Although the effect is not exactly like that of the alexandrine, it provides more support for the notion that three-beat a-verses can occur without disrupting the flow of a poem. Derek Attridge suggests that the line-length variations in ballad meter provide rhythmically ingenuous variation. Although the form in its fullest manifestation has four lines with four beats each, the more common form is the 4.3.4.3 form, as in:

x / x / x / x /

She 's laid her down upon her bed,

x / x / x /

An soon she 's fa'n asleep,

x / x / x / x /

And soon oer every tender limb

x / x / x /

Cauld death began to creep.

Ballad 96A, 'The Gay Goshawk'.20 (before 1802)[137]

[136] James Thomson, *James Thomson: Poetical Works*, ed. by J. Logie Robertson (London: Oxford University Press, 1965), p. 263.

Attridge does not consider the 4.3.4.3 ballad a 'rhythmic form distinct from' 4.4.4.4; in scansions of the three-beat lines, he regularly notes a fourth, 'unrealised' beat in brackets.[138] This unrealized beat sets this kind of variation apart from both the alexandrines discussed above and three-beat a-verses, but it is clear that ballad meter provides another example of how changing the number of beats in a line does not necessarily disrupt a rhythm. Indeed, one popular theory of the origin of ballad meter holds that pairs of lines came from the single, seven-foot Latin line known as the septenarius.[139] This origin in a single line further supports the idea of a single rhythm effected by lines differing in length and numbers of beats. Like the alexandrine amidst iambic pentameters, the lines of only three realized beats in ballad meter show that there is a long-standing tradition in English poetry of using line length to diversify rhythms without abandoning the core movement of a poem.

Yakovlev likens the difference between standard and crowded alliterative long lines to that between shorter and longer syllable-stress lines. In reference to the extended b-verse of OE poetry, he writes:

> It is clearly a very regular metre built upon the same principles as the normal [non-extended] verse, but with a different surface form. Risking a flawed analogy, one could compare the prosodic relation of the 'normal' and 'extended' metres in Old English to that of a contemporary tetrameter and pentameter.'

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[137] *English and Scottish Popular Ballads*, ed. by Helen Child Sargent, George Lyman Kittredge, and Francis James Child (Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1904), p. 203. The edition has a space between *she* and *'s* in both occurrences of the construction.
[138] Attridge, *Rhythms*, p. 87.
[139] Brogan, 'Ballad Meter', pp. 118-20.

Similarly, Pearsall considers the relation of the standard Middle English alliterative a-verse to the crowded a-verse like that of the ten-syllable lines in Dryden's heroic couplets to Dryden's twelve-syllable alexandrines.[140]

The three-beat a-verse of Middle English alliterative poetry has much in common with Alexander Pope's alexandrine, the closing alexandrine of the Spenserian stanza, and the lines of alternating length in ballad meter. The middle of any given line is metrically indistinguishable from that of any other line, regardless of line length. The shorter versions, whether the standard Middle English alliterative a-verse, the iambic pentameter, or the ballad line with only three realized beats, constitute subsets of the longer versions; the longer versions subsume the shorter versions. One might say that these types of verses are locally indistinguishable since a string of words could occur as easily in one as in another. The variation in dip-length in inductive meters may make the equivalence less obvious than it is in deductive meters with steady dip-lengths, but the equivalence is nevertheless there. As a later section in this chapter will show, the equivalence is empirically verifiable. Middle English alliterative a-verse meter, like that of the hypermetric Old English verse, 'is constructed on precisely the same prosodic principles' as that of standard verses.[141]

Chapter Two's account of b-verse demotion also provides support for three-beat a-verses. The internal argument for demotion, based on the b-verse's template meter, cycles back around to reinforce the argument for three-beat a-verses in two ways. First, the classification of the b-verse demotion as countermetrical variation does more than position

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[140] Derek Pearsall, *Old English and Middle English Poetry*, The Routledge History of English Poetry, 1 (London, Henley, and Boston: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1977), p. 160, in Inoue, *A-Verse*, p. 4.
[141] Yakovlev, *Development*, p. 26.

it squarely within the realm of acceptable metrical modulation. Based on Chatman's model of degrees of metrical complexity, countermetrical variation actually is more complex than intrasystemic variation like changes in line length. If one is willing to accept the countermetrical variation of b-verse demotions, then the less complex intrasystemic variation effected by three-beat a-verses should cause no offense. Acceptance of b-verse demotions but not three-beat a-verses would constitute neglect of the hierarchy of metrical complexity.

The account of b-verse demotion not only highlights the minimal metrical complexity of the three-beat a-verse, but also raises a crippling question for the argument that wants to limit the a-verse to two beats. If one accepts that the deductive element of the b-verse meter—its template—is stronger than the deductive element in the a-verse, certain statistics make clear that the two-beat a-verse theory is wholly untenable. In the b-verse, with its stringent template that permits only eight metrical patterns, demotion has a rareness on par with the rareness of two-syllable dips in predominately iambic pentameter verse. The exact count of b-verses with demotion in the one-thousand line corpus is 34. In the first half-line, the prominence of a template element is dramatically smaller than it is in the second half-line. Instead of eight possible metrical patterns, there are over one hundred metrical patterns. One could only expect demotion to occur less frequently amidst so much leniency; indeed, one would expect a dramatically lower number of demotions in an environment with such a demonstrably weaker deductive element. It is a great weakness of the two-beat theory that it calls for a rate of demotions six times the rate of demotion in the b-verse. In proposing demotions in fully 225 out of the 1000 verses, the two-beat theory

proposes a rate of demotion on par with the strictest of English's iambic pentameter (such as that of Alexander Pope). Such a proposal neglects the relatively minor role played by deductive meter in the a-verse and misconstrues the nature of metrical demotion generally. The particular use of demotion in the two-beat theory of the a-verse, inasmuch it neglects the historical status of the phenomenon, shuns much of an entire infrastructure of medieval poetics.

STATISTICAL EVIDENCE FOR A THEORY OF RHYTHMIC CONSISTENCY IN THE LONG LINE

The statistical evidence reinforces the preceding principled argumentation against the two-beat a-verse theory and in favor of a theory that allows three beats. This section of the chapter surveys the evidence and then compares the results to the implications of Inoue and Stokes' Spacing Rule. The following procedure will be used:

- Observing the principles and technical assumptions outlined in Chapter One, scan the lines in the corpus. This group of principles and assumptions will be called the Consistent Rhythm Theory.
- Break all scansions into segments systematically (using a method to be described in greater detail later in the chapter).
- Tally the different kinds of segments.
- Use the tallies to compare the composition of standard a-verses, crowded a-verses, and all b-verses produced by the Rhythmic Consistency Theory.

- Generate second scansions for the crowded a-verses by following Inoue and Stokes' Spacing Rule.
- Carry out the segment analysis described above on the Spacing Rule's scansions.
- Compare the results for Inoue and Stokes' theory to the results for the Consistent Rhythm Theory.

This section of the chapter explains the methodology in greater detail, presents the tallies, and concludes with an interpretation of the comparisons.

While the debate on beat-counts focuses on the crowded a-verses, the rhythmic profiles of the standard a-verse and of the b-verse provide valuable benchmarks for the comparison of theories. For example, in considering the appropriate frequency of beat-offbeat segments (i.e., /x, with exactly one offbeat), it will be helpful to know how often such segments occur in the standard a-verse and in the b-verse. As we shall see, beat-offbeat segments are a familiar part of Middle English alliterative poetry. Such segments occur beginning with the first beat in each of the following examples.

x x / x /x x[142]

And my **f**edde **f**oule**ȝ** **f**atted with scla**ȝ**t

'And my well-fed fowls fattened for [the] slaughter'

C.56

[142] *Foule**ȝ*** < disyllabic OE *fugol*.

x x x / x / x

Boþe **G**od and his **g**ere and hym to **g**reme cachen

'Scorn God and his gear and raise him to wrath'

C.16

Such data from standard a-verses and from all b-verses provides benchmarks for a comparison that tests the hypothesis that:

> The overall rhythmic profile of the a-verse (including standard and crowded a-verses) becomes:
>
> - more like that of the b-verse under the Consistent Rhythm Theory and
> - more differentiated from that of the b-verse when the Spacing Rule is observed.

The beat-offbeat segment used as an example above is only one of dozens of ways to segment verses. Each way has its own strengths and limitations. One angle of approach is to consider the individual verse as a sequence of beat-dip segments (notated /___). Segmentation of the verse

/ x x x / x /x

Fon neuer in **f**orty daye3 and þen þe **f**lod ryses

'Never ceased for forty days, and then the flood rises'

C.369

would produce a /xxx segment, *Fon neuer*, and a pair of /x segments, *forty* and *daye3*.

Alternatively, one could use the dip-beat segment, the beat-dip-beat segment, merely the dip, or the dip-beat-dip segment.[143] The present study looks at the results of using three types of segments, namely, /___/, /___, and ___/. Rather than compare every kind of segment for each of the three segment types, this comparison presents the most striking ones. For the /___/ type, these are // and /x/. For the /___ type these are /xxx and /xxxx. As a representative of the ___/ type, the study uses the xxx/ segment.

Table 1, at the end of the chapter, summarizes the data and confirms the hypothesis: In the case of all five segments selected for comparison, the Consistent Rhythm Theory reduces the rhythmic disparity between the two half-lines. In the cases of a couple of the kinds of verse-segments, ignoring the Spacing Rule not only reduces disparities, but actually brings the rhythmic profile of the full set of a-verses into alignment with that of the b-verse.[144] On the other hand, in all cases, the rhythms predicted by the Spacing Rule combine unfavorably with standard a-verses. That is to say that the Spacing Rule adds to rhythmic disparity between standard a-verses and all b-verses.

Treating all ictus candidates in the crowded a-verses as metrically stressed brings the frequency of the pattern // in the a-verse closer to the frequency in the b-verse. The pattern is fairly common in b-verses, where nearly one in ten verses has clashing metrical stress. The pattern quickly becomes familiar to a reader of alliterative verse:

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[143] Using underscores to indicate dips of indeterminate length, this study uses the following notations for these four segment types: ___/, /___/, ___, and ___/___.

[144] In the whole corpus, there is an average of about two offbeats per beat in the b-verse, and under the Consistent Rhythm Theory the figure is only slightly higher for all a-verses (standard and crowded) put together. Crowded a-verses make that balance possible: Crowded a-verses' low average of 1.5 offbeats per beat offsets the average for standard a-verses, 2.6 offbeats per beat.

x x x / / x

Pacience is a **p**oynt þaȝ hit dis**p**lese ofte

'Patience is a virtue though it displeases often'

P.1

x x x / / x

Þen **l**ede **l**enger þi **l**ore þat þus me **l**es makeȝ

'Than to teach longer your doctrine which thus makes me false.'

P.428

x x / / x

For-to **w**ayte on þat **w**on what schulde worþe after

'In order to observe in that dwelling what would occur afterwards'

P.436

x x / / x

Kryst **k**ydde hit hymself in a **c**arp oneȝ

'Christ made it known himself in a speech once'

C.23

Clashing metrical stress occurs rarely enough in standard a-verses to cite all examples here:[145]

[145] The only standard a-verse example that Tolkien, Gordon, and Davis offer in their discussion of clashing metrical stress (*Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, ed. by Tolkien, Gordon, and Davis, p. 148) in fact does not have clashing metrical stress. The final (metrically unstressed) *-e* of a plural participial attributive adjective intervenes between the beats: *Þe most kyd knyȝtez vnder Krystes seluen*, 'The most illustrious knights under Christ himself' (SGGK.51). The a-verse calls for this scansion: xxx/x/x.

/ / x x x

Kryst **k**ydde hit hymself in a **c**arp one3

'Christ made it known himself in a speech once'

C.23

x x x / / x x

Þose wern **m**en **m**eþele3 and **m**a3ty on vrþe

'Those were ruthless men and mighty upon earth'

C.273

x x x / / x x

Þat euer I **s**ette **s**aule inne and **s**ore hit me rwe3

'In whom I ever placed [a] soul and it grieves me deeply'

C.290

x x / / x x x

Bot my **f**orwarde with þe I **f**esten on þis wyse

'But my covenant with you I seal in this manner'

C.327[146]

[146] Several pieces of evidence support treating *þe* as metrically unstressed in C.327a. Elsewhere it occurs as a metrically unstressed syllable at the end of the long line (SGGK.1679 *For I haf fraysted þe twys, and faythful I fynde þe*; cf. Yakovlev, *Development*, p. 105). It also occurs as a metrically unstressed syllable at the end of the rhyming verse SGGK.413 *Ta now þy grymme tole to þe* (rhyming with *soþe*). As a non-alliterating closed-class word, it ranks low on the list of words one might promote to provide this a-verse's second beat. On the other hand, the nominal status of the second element of *forwarde*, *warde* (< OE feminine noun *weard*), supports treating it as metrically stressed. The alliterating *f*, the occurrence of *for-* within a noun, the absence of a second clear ictus candidate, and the likeness of the pattern xx//xxx to other attested a-verse

x / / x x x

þe **s**e **s**a3tled þer-with as **s**one as ho mo3t

'The sea settled thereupon as soon as she could'

P.232

x x x / /x x

Bot now I **w**ot **w**yterly þat þose vn**w**yse ledes

'But now I know certainly that those unwise men'

P.330

x x / / x

Þenne þe **r**enk **r**adly **r**os as he my3t

'Then the man [as] rapidly rose as he could'

P.351

x x x x / / xx

For he þat is to **r**akel to **r**enden his cloþe3

'For he who is too hasty to rip his clothes'

P.526

True clashing metrical stress may be even less common in standard a-verses than these eight verses suggest. Metrical pauses may cushion some of the clashes.[147] Most of the a-verses in fact meet the criteria for metrical pause, namely two syllables with primary linguistic accent followed by a syllable with secondary accent: The word strings *men*

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clashing metrical stress patterns, such as x//xxx and xxx//xx, all support the conclusion that *for-* provides this verse with a beat.

[147] As Cable, *English*, p. 146, writes, 'Clashing stress and secondary stress are the prerequisites for metrical pause.'

meþeleȝ (C.273a), *wot wyterly* (P.330a), *renk radly* (P.351a), and *to rakel* (P.526a) all have two primary accents followed by a secondary accent. Secondarily accented *-e-* between *saȝt-* and *-led* in *saȝtled* (i.e., *saȝteled*, P.232a) is plausible, especially in light of the spelling *saȝttel* elsewhere in *Patience*.[148] That leaves C.23a, C.290a, and C.327a as the only standard a-verses in the corpus with true clashing metrical stress.

Clashing metrical stress occurs far more often in crowded a-verses. Here are some typical examples:

x / / x x / x

A **þ**ral **þ**ryȝt in þe **þ**rong vn**þ**ryuandely cloþed

'A thrall thrust in the throng improperly clothed'

C.135

x / / x / xx

In **d**ryȝ **d**red and **d**aunger þat **d**urst **d**o non oþer

'With enduring awe and submission he who dared to nothing else'

C.342

x / x x x / / x

Þe **s**or of **s**uch a **s**wete place burde **s**ynk to my hert

'The sorrow over such a fair place would sink into my heart'

P.507

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[148] See P.529 *Ful softly with suffraunce saȝttel me bihoueȝ* 'Very gently, with forbearance, I am obliged to become reconciled'. Such intrusion of non-etymological sounds, or 'epenthesis', occurs frequently in the course of language change; thus, for example, in some MdnE dialects *umbrella* has four syllables (/uhm buh 'rel la/) instead of three (/uhm brel la/, < Italian *ombrella* and *ombrello*).

In the Rhythmic Consistency Theory the prevalence of clashing metrical stress in crowded a-verses counterbalances the scarcity of clashing metrical stress in standard a-verses. The result is that instead of only the handful of clashing metrical stresses from standard a-verses cited above, there are over thirty clashing metrical stresses in the first half-line, most of which come from crowded a-verses.

There are 86 occurrences of clashing metrical stress in the b-verse. In all cases, line-end syllables with a reduced vowel provide the environment needed for true clashing metrical stress.[149] In light of the improbability of a restriction of the phenomenon to only one side of the long line, the tally of 34 occurrences (28 of which are 'true' clashes, unmodified by following secondary linguistic accent) in all a-verses is credible. Crowded verses provide the poet with a strategy for fortifying the first half-line with the sound of adjacent metrical stresses.

Tallies of beat-offbeat-beat segments also show that crowded a-verses alleviate a would-be rhythmic imbalance between the half-lines. Without crowded a-verses, these segments would make up less than one out of ten of all /___/ patterns in the a-verse. All occurrences would have to come from relatively rare standard a-verses like these:

[149] Syllables with secondary linguistic accent are also absent from the position after adjacent 'candidates' for ictus in crowded b-verses (e.g., P.354b; see citation above), so the poet has entirely avoided two linguistic accents followed by a secondary linguistic accent in the b-verse. However one handles crowded b-verses, it is clear that a metrical pause can occur only in the a-verse. This constraint aligns with the same constraint in Old English poetry described by Cable, *English*, 146.

x / x / x x x

Anoþer nayed also and nurned þis cawse

'Another refused also and gave this reason'

C.65

x x x / x / x

So þat my palays platful be pyȝt al aboute

'So that my palace may be made absolutely full all around'

C.83

/ x / x x x

Broȝten bachlereȝ hem wyth þat þay by bonkeȝ metten

'Brought young men with them whom they met by the hill-sides'

C.86

By contrast, in the b-verse, the frequency of beat-offbeat-beat segments is one out of five /___/ patterns. The following examples, with their familiar patterns of metrically stressed and unstressed syllables, show that the beat-offbeat-beat pattern is common in the b-verse:

x x / x / x

And his tabarde totorne and his toteȝ oute

'And his upper garment torn and his hairs [sticking] out'

C.41

x x x / x / x

Oþer **a**ni **o**n of **a**lle þyse he schulde be **h**alden **v**tter

'Or any one of all these he would be thrown outside'

C.42

x x / x / x

And þus **sch**al he be **sch**ent for his **sch**rowde feble

'And thus he shall be ruined because of his inferior clothing'

C.47

With uncanny precision the crowded a-verses close the gap in frequency of the pattern on the two sides of the caesura. The pattern is extremely common in crowded a-verses. Here are some typical examples:

x / x / x x x / x

As **M**aþew **m**eleȝ in his **m**asse of þat **m**an ryche

'As Matthew tells in his mass-gospel about that wealthy man'

C.51

x / x x / x / x

Wyth **s**childeȝ of wylde **s**wyn, **s**waneȝ, and croneȝ

'With slices of wild swine, swans, and cranes'

C.58

The crowded a-verse's high number of beat-offbeat-beat segments bring the proportion of /___/ a-verse segments that are /x/ to nearly one in five, and thereby neutralize rhythmic disparity with the b-verse.

As Table 1 at the end of the present chapter shows, the longer kinds of verse-segment provide similarly strong support for treating all ictus candidates in the a-verse as metrically stressed. The precise nature of the effect is different from that of the shorter segments. For the shorter segments (// and /x/), it is a high frequency in crowded a-verses that counterbalances a low frequency in standard a-verses. For the longer segments (/xxx, /xxxx, and xxx/), a low frequency in crowded a-verses counterbalances a high frequency in standard a-verses.

This balancing effect occurs with /xxx segments, which help crowded a-verses (e.g., P.108a, below) counterbalance standard a-verses (e.g., C.118a) to bring the a-verse total in line with that of the b-verse (e.g., C.120b).

x / x x x / x /

He **s**wenges me þys **s**wete **s**chip **s**wefte fro þe hauen

'It swings this good ship swiftly from the harbor'

P.108

x x / x x x / x

So with **m**arschal at her **m**ete **m**ensked þay were

'Thus at their meal by [the] marshal they were treated courteously'

C.118

x / x x x / x

And ȝet þe **s**ymplest in þat **s**ale watȝ **s**erued to þe fulle

'And yet, the plainest man in that hall was served to the limit'

C.120

At a little less than one in five for the full set of verses on both sides of the half-line, the overall frequency of /xxx is similar to that described for /x/ above.

As one of the rarer beat-dip segments in the corpus, /xxxx occurs at a rate of only one in fifty in standard a-verses. P.99a is an example of a standard a-verse with a four-syllable dip.[150]

/ x x x x / x x x

Maches hym with þe **m**aryneres **m**akes her paye

'Brings himself into agreement with the mariners [and] gives

[them] their pay' P.99

Much more common than a-verses with strings of four offbeats are multisyllabic dips that can contract through conventional metrical processes like vowel syncope and elision, as in the following verses. The resulting segments count as /xxx and are included in the tally of /xxx segments above.

x / x x x / x

I keuered me a **c**umfort þat now is **c**aȝt fro me

'I obtained for myself one consolation that now is taken from me'

P.485

/ x x x / x x

Pyneȝ me in a **p**rysoun **p**ut me in stokkes

'Enclose me in a prison, put me in stocks'

P.79

[150] Chapter Four will argue for promotion of an offbeat in such extra-long dips.

As for the b-verse, /xxxx occurs, arguably, not at all. Apparent extra-long dips tend to offer opportunities for reduction. For example, in P.72b below, etymological support for final *-e* on imperative *say* and for three syllables in *arende* (< OE *ǽrende*) imply the presence of six syllables between the first beat and the end of the verse. Metrically stressing the second syllable of *arende* instead of this word's first syllable would create the necessary verse-final single metrically unstressed syllable. It would also make the multisyllabic dip four syllables long, though. Reduction of the size of the dip to three syllables would require elimination of either the second syllable of *say(e)* (through apocope) or the middle syllable of *arende* (using the metrical status that P.202's spelling of the same word, *arnde*, suggests).

* x /x x x x / x

x /x x x / x

Now **s**we**ȝ**e me **þ**ider **s**wyftly and **s**ay me **þ**is ar<u>e</u>nde

'Now hasten there for me swiftly and speak this message for me'

P.72

The tallies thus strongly suggest rarity of /xxxx in the standard a-verse and near-absence of it in the b-verse.[151] The pattern is even rarer in crowded a-verses than in standard a-verses. Many potential extra-long dips can be reduced through syncope and elision, as the extra-long dips in the following examples can:

[151] For further evidence of such near-absence, see Ad Putter, 'Chaucer's Verse and Alliterative Poetry: Grammar, Metre, and Some Secrets of the Syllable Count', *Poetica: An International Journal of Linguistic-Literary Studies,* 67 (2007), pp. 19-35 (32 n.12), and Judith Jefferson and Ad Putter, 'Alliterative Metre and Editorial Practice: The Case of *Death and Liffe*', in *Approaches to the Metres of Alliterative Verse*, ed. by Judith Jefferson and Ad Putter, Leeds Texts and Monographs, New Series, 17 (Leeds: School of English, University of Leeds, 2009), pp. 269-92 (273 n.16).

x / x / x x x /x[152]

And felle fetteręȝ to his fete festeneȝ bylyue

'And quickly fasten cruel fetters to his feet'

C.156

/ x x x / x / x

Gederen to þe gyde-ropes þe grete cloþ falles

'[And] pull at the guy ropes the great cloth unfurls'

P.105

x / x x x / x /

þou dipteȝ me of þe depe se in-to þe dymme hert

'You plunged me from the deep sea into the dark heart [of the whale]'

P.308

Because of this scarcity of /xxxx patterns in crowded a-verses, a-verses with more than two ictus candidates again tug the overall a-verse rhythm toward that of the b-verse.

[152] Following the present study's Chapter One assumptions, word-initial *h-* does not elide unaccented *-o*.

The frequency of the three-offbeat version of the dip-beat segment (xxx/) contributes to the effect that clashing metrical stress, the beat-offbeat-beat segment, and the beat–multisyllabic-dip segments have on the rhythmic relation between the half-lines. Fully one in three dip-beat segments in standard a-verses has three offbeats. Many standard a-verses, like the following one, in fact have no other type of dip-beat segment:

x x x / x x x /

And at þi **b**anne we haf **b**ro3t as þou **b**eden habbe3

'And according to your edict, we have brought as you have ordered'

C.95

In contrast to the standard a-verse, one in seven dip-beat segments has three offbeats in the b-verse. One such dip opens the following verse:

x x x / /x

And als **w**ith oþer, **w**ylsfully upon a **w**range **w**yse

'And also against others, wilfully in a wrong manner'

C.268

A ratio of one in six in crowded a-verses (e.g., as occurs in P.26a) again tugs the overall a-verse rhythm toward that of the b-verse.

x x x / x x / x / x

For þay þe **g**racious **G**odes sunes schal **g**odly be called

'For they the sons of [the] gracious God shall properly be called'

P.26

These tallies show that treating all of the crowded a-verse's ictus candidates as beats redresses some of the rhythmic imbalance between half-lines. Inoue and Stokes' Spacing Rule has the opposite effect. This section uses the five segments to summarize the rhythmic profile that the Spacing Rule implies.

Through its mandate to subordinate ictus candidates, the Spacing Rule entirely eliminates clashing metrical stress and the beat-offbeat-beat segment from crowded a-verses. For example, by subordinating the syllables *Lorde*, *cum*, and *whyl-*, Inoue and Stokes would eliminate clashing metrical stress from P.264a and /x/ from P.443a and P.519a:

x / x x / x

Lorde, **c**olde watȝ his **c**umfort and his **c**are huge

'Lord! Cold was his comfort and his sorrow great'

P.264

x **x** x / x x / x

Þe whyle **G**od of his **g**race ded **g**rowe of þat soyle

'During which time God, in his grace did grow from that soil'

P.443

x **x** x / x x x / x

And cum and **c**nawe me for **k**yng and my **c**arpe leue

'And come and acknowledge me as King and believe my message'

P.519

Such readings of crowded a-verses unfortunately eradicate them of clashing metrical stress and beat-offbeat-beat segments. Instead of redressing the rhythmic imbalance between standard a-verses and all b-verses, this eradication exacerbates the imbalance. Leaving intact only the handful of clashing metrical stresses in standard a-verses discussed earlier, the Spacing Rule nearly restricts clashing metrical stress to the second half-line. One cannot understate the improbability of such a sweeping intolerance for clashing metrical stress on the part of any Middle English alliterative poet.

Challengers of the Consistent Rhythm Theory, the theory that allows for three-beat a-verses, might point to the poet's desire to differentiate metrically between half-lines. The dubious notion that the b-verse is the nearly exclusive host of consecutive metrically stressed syllables is of a different breed, however, from the legitimate metrical requirement that a- and b-verses have different metrical patterns. It is one thing to say that xx/xx/x can occur only in the a-verse and x/xx/x only in the b-verse, but it is another thing to say that a pattern as basic as // is highly restricted, nearly proscribed, on only one side of the caesura. The legitimate metrical differentiation of the two half-lines leaves the possibility of a- and b-verse patterns that are extremely close to each other, but not the same. The following a- and b-verse patterns are off by only one metrically unstressed syllable.

x x / x x / x

In on **d**aschande **d**am **d**ryue3 me ouer

'in one dashing flood drive over me'

P.312

x / x x / x

A wylde walterande whal as wyrde þen schaped

'A wild, tossing whale as fate then arranged'

P.247

Restriction of patterns such as // and /x/ is dubious because of the local scope of the restriction: It rules out patterns at the level of two and three syllables. Such a restriction is so local that it would count as full-fledged rhythmic shift rather than as mere metrical differentiation.

The metrical differentiation of the two half-lines exhibited in Middle English alliterative verse governs long line patterns of beats and offbeats without becoming rhythmic differentiation. In this sense metrical differentiation is analogous to the trochaic substitutions that Shakespeare employs as, for example, in line 2 of Sonnet 60:

Like as the waves make towards the pebbled shore,

/ x x / x / x / x /

So do our minutes hasten to their end

Shakespeare, *Sonnet 60*.1-2 (probably mid-1590s)[153]

Such substitutions meet a standard of rhythmic consistency, which is to say that in the specific contexts in which the poet has the option of using them, such as in the first foot of the iambic pentameter, they fit into the pattern of beats and offbeats undisruptively. Trochaic substitution became a convention not out of arbitrary popularization, but because the beginning of the verse often provides the syntactic environment most suited for them.

[153] Shakespeare, *Complete Signet*, ed. by Barnet, p. 1740. The date comes from p. 1729.

The same principle accounts for the scarcity of trochaic substitutions in the fifth foot of iambic pentameters. The kind of rhythmic difference between half-lines that the Spacing Rule implies is analogous to the jarring pattern of such hypothetical line-final trochees in iambic pentameter.

The complete absence of beat-offbeat-beat segments from the scansions produced by the Spacing Rule does more damage to Inoue and Stokes' argument. Like the situation with clashing metrical stress, the consequence of the Spacing Rule here is a mid-line rhythmic jolt. The pattern occurs nearly two hundred times in the b-verse, as in these examples:

x x / x / x

And als þer **b**en doumbe **b**este3 in þe **b**ur3 mony

'And there are also dumb beasts many in the city'

P.516

x x / x / x

And **c**um and **c**nawe me for **k**yng and my **c**arpe leue

'And come and acknowledge me as King, and believe my message'

P.519

Standard a-verses, which Inoue and Stokes spare from the Spacing Rule, have nearly one hundred beat-offbeat-beat patterns. Such segments occur initially and medially, respectively, in the following two verses:

/ x / x x x

Summe **s**wymmed þeron þat **s**aue hemself trawed

'Some who hoped to save themselves swam in it.'

C.388

x x / x / x

Thay **a**r **h**appen **a**lso þat **h**an in **h**ert rauþe

'Blessed are they also who have compassion in [their] hearts'

P.21

As Table 1 at the end of the present chapter shows, under the Spacing Rule, the absence of /x/ segments from crowded a-verses would pull the overall rhythmic profile of the a-verse away from that of the b-verse.

While Inoue and Stokes' theory implies the absence of // and /x/ segments in crowded a-verses, it implies an overabundance of the /xxx, /xxxx, and xxx/ segments. Subordination of *þrote* in the following verse, for example, creates a /xxxx segment, though Inoue and Stokes likely would reduce the segment to /xxx through vowel syncope in *deueleȝ*:

* / x x x / x x x

Þroly into þe deu<u>eleȝ **þ**rote</u> man **þ**rynge**ȝ** bylyue

'steadfastly into the devil's throat promptly Man makes [his] way'

C.180

With final *-e* on *myry* and application of the Spacing Rule, the following verse would end with a /xxxx segment:

*x / x x x / xx x x

Þe **m**ake3 of þy **m**yry sune3 þis **m**eyny of a3te

'The spouses of your pleasant sons this company of eight'

C.331

The Spacing Rule's subordination of *fell–* creates the verse-initial xxx/ segment here:

*x x x / x x x /x

And **f**elle **f**ettere3 to his **f**ete **f**estene3 bylyue

'And quickly fasten cruel fetters to his feet'

C.156

In the case of all three kinds of these longer verse-segments (/xxx, /xxxx, and xxx/), the tallies for Inoue and Stokes' crowded a-verses would again exacerbate the rhythmic imbalance between the a- and b-verses. These figures make clear that the Spacing Rule entails sharp rhythmic disparity between crowded a-verses and all other verses. If there is a rule that posits 'constant changes in the time signature',[154] it is the Spacing Rule itself.

LINE-UNIFYING PATTERNS

Taking a broader view helps to put this empirical survey in perspective. To this point, a number of different kinds of observations have been presented along with evaluations of various possible interpretations. Metrists devote much of their energy to identifying patterns and then supporting their observations with extensive documentation of scanned lines, seeming exceptions, and the like. As enormous as this task can be, especially

[154] Inoue and Stokes, 'Caesura', p. 2.

with a large corpus, it counts only as step one toward the goal of identifying a meter. One senses that, on their own, catalogues of corroborating data of patterned distributions of beats and offbeats fall short of the ultimate goal in several ways. The data can make evident certain surprising facts, but the further away from some simple rule the observations of patterns get, the less plausible they become as explanations of how the poet approached the task of writing metrical verse.

An explanation of a meter must do more than identify patterns in data. Noam Chomsky's work in linguistics provides a useful model for gauging the adequacy of theoretical explanations of phenomena.[155] He gives a clear statement of the model in a 1964 article, in a section called 'Levels of Success for Grammatical Description'. Although Chomsky focuses there on linguistics, the methodology can apply also to poetic rhythms. In that section, Chomsky identifies three successively higher standards that a theory can meet. Correct presentation of the observed data is the first and lowest standard. A theory meeting the second standard of adequacy gives an account of the data 'in terms of significant generalizations that express underlying regularities'. The third and highest level of success that a theory can achieve relates to how easily the generalizations might be learned. For Chomsky, meeting this standard involves developing a theory that can readily explain how a speaker with certain 'intrinsic capacities' could acquire a grammar. In a theory of poetic meter, the correlate for this level of success would be a plausible explanation for the set of principles that a poet could keep in mind while composing. It is

[155] Noam Chomsky, 'Current Issues in Linguistic Theory', in *The Structure of Language: Readings in the Philosophy of Language*, ed. by J. A. Fodor and J. J. Katz (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1964), chap. 3, pp. 50-118 (62-3).

more plausible, for example, that a poet would compose with a short list of principles (a meter) than a long list of permissible patterns. The short list of principles would thus count as a more successful theory. These three 'levels of success' are called observational adequacy, descriptive adequacy, and explanatory adequacy.

Scansions of verses in the corpus according to the assumptions of Chapter One count toward observational adequacy. They provide a principled account of the actual patterns of beats and offbeats implied by the lines of poetry. These scansions provide a foundation for discerning recurring patterns. A collection of generalizations that account for the multitude of phenomena in the long lines (e.g., distinct verse types, seeming exceptional verses, etc.) is required to achieve descriptive adequacy. Observations of some line-wide patterns and other observations presented in the rest of the present chapter are designed to meet this standard of adequacy. They help one apprehend the data as the natural result of a small set of generalizations. In an extended analysis of targeted metrical differentiation, Chapter Four of the present study attempts to explain the data by collapsing generalizations about it into a simple principle. If plausible as a strategy that a poet might take, then the theory of meter presented in Chapter Four would attain explanatory adequacy.

The statistical evidence for the coherence of the long line suggests that there may be promise in further pursuing identification of line-unifying metrical observations. This endeavor could boost the descriptive adequacy of the Rhythmic Consistency Theory. It would join the principle of metrical differentiation of the two half-lines and the requirement of a lull in each verse (see Chapter Two) as a valuable way of understanding the long line.

The status of the crowded a-verse as a mechanism for tightening the rhythmic coherence of the long line suggests that taking the crowded a-verse as a starting point for seeking further line-wide requirements could prove fruitful. One can take the question of the rhythmic similarities between the a- and b-verses one step further than the requirement mentioned in Chapter Two of a lull in each verse. If one classifies all dips in crowded a-verses as 'multisyllabic' and 'short', then every verse has a characteristic pattern. Using 'm' for metrical positions containing multisyllabic dips, 'ʃ' for positions with short dips, and a slash for metrical positions with beats, a crowded verse with two multisyllabic dips and then two short dips, for example, could be represented as m/m/ʃ/ʃ. Since by definition all dips will always be separated by beats, the pattern could be represented more concisely as mmʃʃ. A crowded a-verse with a multisyllabic dip, followed by a short dip, another multisyllabic dip, and then another short dip could be represented as mʃmʃ. What one finds is that all of the following sequences of dips are permitted in crowded a-verses, and many are quite numerous.

Acceptable Configurations of Dips in Crowded A-Verses

mmʃʃ	mʃʃm	ʃmmʃ	ʃmʃʃ	ʃʃmʃ
mʃmʃ	mʃʃʃ	ʃmʃm	ʃʃmm	ʃʃʃm

In contrast, the following patterns are minimally represented in the crowded a-verses in the corpus. Except for the three verses noted in parentheses below, there are no occurrences of the following patterns:

Unacceptable Configurations of Dips in Crowded A-Verses

mmmm

mmmʃ

mmʃm (exception: P.85a *'At alle **p**eryles,' quoþ þe **p**rophete* '["]At all perils["], said the prophet')

mʃmm

ʃmmm

ʃʃʃʃ (exceptions: C.391a ***H**areȝ, **h**ertteȝ **a**lso* 'Hares, [and] harts also'; P.179a *A **l**odes-mon **l**yȝtly* 'A steersman nimbly')

Although these two lists may at first seem random, a closer look reveals patterns. For the present purposes, the most useful pattern is one identified in Chapter Two regarding lulls. Note that every one of the configurations in the list of acceptable configurations for crowded a-verses has at least one multisyllabic dip, indicated by an 'm'. This consistent appearance aligns with the principle that all a-verses have a lull:

> Lull Principle: All verses have at least one lull. A lull can be realized by a multisyllabic dip; a lull also can be realized by a one-syllable dip with a full, rather than reduced, vowel.

This pattern is stated as a principle rather than a constraint since it may be merely the inevitable consequence of other constraints rather than a governing metrical rule.

The Lull Principle sets the stage for identifying affinities between the crowded a-verse and the b-verse while rendering visible a key characteristic of the standard a-verse. Recall that the list of acceptable configurations of dips in crowded a-verses above suggests a

number of principles, of which the Lull Principle is only one. Another pattern exhibited by the crowded a-verse is that although it has at least one lull, it never has more than two multisyllabic dips. Stated more generically, the crowded a-verse always has fewer multisyllabic dips than beats. This generic statement happens to apply to the b-verse as well since the b-verse always has exactly two beats and exactly one multisyllabic dip.

Whereas the Lull Principle applied to all a-verses and all b-verses, the newly proposed limit on the count of multisyllabic dips applies only to crowded a-verses (not to standard a-verses) and all b-verses. There are hundreds of standard a-verses that have just as many multisyllabic dips as beats. There are even thirty-six standard a-verses that have more multisyllabic dips than beats. For example:

x x / x x x /x x

And aprochen to hys presens and prestez arn called

'And come into his presence and are called priests'

C.8

x x / x x / x x x

Hit watz, not for a halyday honestly arayed

'[That] someone was not decently dressed for a festival'

C.134

The corpus thus exhibits the following pattern:

Multisyllabic Dip Limit: In the crowded a-verse and in all b-verses, but not in the standard a-verse, there are fewer multisyllabic dips than beats.

The exhibition of a pattern in both the crowded a-verse and the b-verse, but not in the standard a-verse, suggests that it might be valuable to explore affiliations between the crowded a-verse and the b-verse. The b-verse, of course, has *exactly* one multisyllabic dip and *exactly* two short dips. What the Lull Principle and the Multisyllabic Dip Limit show is that the crowded a-verse has a *minimum* of one lull and a *minimum* two short dips. The crowded a-verse thus exhibits a pattern reminiscent of the basic b-verse meter. There is an echo of the b-verse pattern in the crowded a-verse; the difference is that in the crowded a-verse there is one additional dip, which can be either short or multisyllabic. The crowded a-verse, then, is like a sibling to the b-verse, with the only stipulation that it can have either one additional short dip or one additional multisyllabic dip.

All 290 crowded a-verses observe the Lull Principle and the Multisyllabic Dip Limit. What is more remarkable is that 280 of those 290 crowded a-verses (or 97%) actually exhibit an even more specific pattern that the b-verse also exhibits:

> One-Syllable Dip Preference: In the crowded a-verse and in the b-verse there is usually at least one dip with exactly one syllable.

There are only nine crowded a-verses that flout the One-Syllable Dip Preference:

x x x / / x x /

Ne neuer so sodenly so3t vnsoundely to weng

'Nor ever sought so suddenly to exact penalties adversely'

C.201

x x / / x x /

Forþy so semly to see syþen wern none

'Therefore, none were so fair to be seen then.'

C.262

/ x x / x x x /

Whyder in worlde þat þou wylt and what is þyn arnde?

'Where in the world do you wish [to go] and what is your mission?'

P.202

/ x x / /

Fyndes he a fayr schyp to þe fare redy

'He finds a good ship ready for the voyage'

P.98

/ x x x / /

Cachen vp þe crossayl cables þay fasten

'[They] hook up the sail yard, they fasten [the] cables'

P.102

/ x x x / /

Why art þou so waymot wyȝe, for so lyttel

'Why are you so upset, sir, for so little'

P.492

/ / x x / x x[156]

Þre **h**undred of cupyde3 þou **h**olde to þe lenþe

'about three hundred cubits you must measure for the length'

C.315

/ / x x x /

A3t **h**appes he hem **h**y3t and **v**che-**o**n a mede

'He designated eight blessings for them, and a reward for each one'

P.11

/ / x x x /

Er gete 3e no **h**appe I **h**ope forsoþe.

'Or you will have no luck I truly believe'

P.212a

The applicability of the Lull Principle, the Multisyllabic Dip Limit, and the One-Syllable Dip Preference to both the crowded a-verse and the b-verse highlights an affinity between these two types of verses. The following comparison of numbers of multisyllabic dips in the different kinds of verses further demonstrates this affinity and shows a way in which the crowded a-verse and b-verse are more like each other than like the standard a-verse.

[156] Elision does not apply to the *-e* of *þre* because, as Chapter One's 'Environments for Elision' list indicates, *h-* does not elide final full *-e*.

Counts of Multisyllabic Dips per Verse

	Standard A-Verses	Three-Beat A-Verses	All B-Verses
At least one	712/712 (100%)	282/284 (99%)	1000/1000 (100%)
At least two	627/712 (88%)	55/284 (19%)	0/1000 (0%)
At least three	37/712 (5%)	1/284 (0%)	0/1000 (0%)

Consistent with the Lull Principle, the first row of this table shows that nearly all verses have a multisyllabic dip; the verses that do not have a multisyllabic dip realize the lull through a one-syllable dip that has a full vowel. The next row of the table reflects the fact that a count of at least two multisyllabic dips is over four times (88% vs. 19%) more common in standard a-verses than in the crowded a-verses. Just like the falloff for the b-verse (i.e., 100% to 0%), the falloff from the first row of the table to the second row for the three-beat a-verses (99% to 19%) is large. Finally, the standard a-verse has many more examples of three multisyllabic dips than the three-beat a-verses. This discrepancy (5% vs. 0%) is large, and especially remarkable in light of the fact that in order for that to be the case, every single dip in the standard a-verses must be a multisyllabic dip, whereas in the three-beat a-verse, only three out of the four dips would need to be multisyllabic. In other words, while all of the dips in a standard a-verse (three dips out of a total of three dips) can be multisyllabic, no more than two out of the four dips in the crowded a-verse can be multisyllabic. This table shows that in this respect the crowded a-verse resembles the b-verse more than it resembles the standard a-verse.

This set of patterns that link the b-verse so closely to the crowded a-verse would seem to leave the standard a-verse behind. Although the standard a-verse follows the Lull

Principle, it observes neither the Multisyllabic Dip Limit nor the One-Syllable Dip Preference. The rhythmic coherence of the Middle English alliterative long line thus comprises:

- observance in every verse of the Lull Principle and
- observance in only the b-verse and the crowded a-verse of the Multisyllabic Dip Limit and the One-Syllable Dip Preference.

CONCLUSION

This chapter began with a comparison of current debates in Middle English alliterative metrics to twentieth-century contention over iambic pentameter. The summary of issues was followed by a principled account of the problems with a two-beat theory of the a-verse. Principled and then empirical support for the Rhythmic Consistency Theory, which allows for three-beat a-verses, was then presented. The theoretical groundwork underlying all of this work was then articulated. Finally, some closing remarks were made on ways that the description of the long line can be enhanced. This chapter demonstrates and characterizes the rhythmic coherence of the Middle English alliterative long line. Insofar as the a-verse is defined negatively against the b-verse, it is dependent on it; it is the call to the b-verse's response. Line-wide observance of the Lull Principle ensures that at least some small part of each verse realizes a common denominator that unites all verses in the long line.

The crowded a-verse in particular reinforces the unity of the long line in multiple ways. First, counts of verse segments show that crowded a-verses tug the overall rhythmic

profile of the a-verse into closer conformity with that of the b-verse, in spite of rigorous metrical differentiation of the two half-lines. For the poet, crowded a-verses provided a mechanism for boosting the prevalence of clashing and beat-offbeat-beat segments (// and /x/) in the a-verse. They also enabled the poet to reduce the prevalence of the three longer segments discussed here, the three- and four-offbeat versions of the beat-dip segment (/xxx and /xxxx) and the three-offbeat version of the dip-beat segment (xxx/). In tandem with this rhythmic assimilation, the crowded a-verses still effect metrical dissimilation between the half-lines, inasmuch as they never infringe on the patterns of offbeats and beats that the b-verse exhibits.

The final part of the chapter makes clear that, as one might expect, extensive recurrence of local patterns helps to achieve an affiliation between the crowded a-verse and the b-verse. The Multisyllabic Dip Limit and the One-Syllable Dip Preference combine to show that the crowded a-verse and the b-verse have a sibling relationship; in fact, the crowded a-verse, like the b-verse, always has at least two short dips and at least one lull, plus it always has one more dip, either short or multisyllabic. It is by retaining as beats all of the a-verse's ictus candidates that the reader can discern metrical recurrence and modulation within the one coherent rhythm of the Middle English Alliterative Revival.

Table 1: How Retaining the Crowded A-Verse Beats Makes the A- and B-Verses Rhythmically Alike[157]

	Spacing Rule's Crowded A-Verses (with stress-subordination) (Total number of verses = 160)	Consistent Rhythm Theory's Crowded A-Verses (no demotion) (Total number of verses = 160)	Standard A-Verses (Total number of verses = 840)	B-Verse, excluding verse-final dips (Total number of verses = 1000)	All Verses under the Rhythmic Consistency Theory (No b-verse-final dips) (Total number of verses = 2000)
Segment Type /___/					
Clashing Metrical Stress: //	0 // segments = 0% of the /___/ segments	26 // segments = 8% of the /___/ segments	8 // segments = 1% of the /___/ segments	86 // segments = 9% of the /___/ segments	120 // segments = 6% of the /___/ segments
/x/ segments	0 /x/ segments = 0% of the /___/ segments	126 /x/ segments = 40% of the /___/ segments	69 /x/ segments = 8% of the /___/ segments	197 /x/ segments = 20% of the /___/ segments	394 /x/ segments = 18% of the /___/ segments
Segment Type /___					
/xxx	99 /xxx segments = 33% of the /___ segments	72 /xxx segments = 15% of the /___ segments	364 /xxx segments = 22% of the /___ segments	169 /xxx segments = 17% of the /___ segments	605 /xxx segments = 19% of the /___ segments
/xxxx	14 /xxxx segments = 4% of the /___ segments	2 /xxxx segments = 0% of the /___ segments	28 /xxxx segments = 2% of the /___ segments	0 /xxxx segments = 0% of the /___ segments	30 /xxxx segments = 1% of the /___ segments
Segment Type ___/					
xxx/	117 xxx/ segments = 37% of the ___/ segments	78 xxx/ segments = 16% of the ___/ segments	585 xxx/ segments = 35% of the ___/ segments	270 xxx/ segments = 14% of the ___/ segments	933 xxx/ segments = 22% of the ___/ segments

[157] In the cases of four segments, the Spacing Rule produces better results than the Consistent Rhythm Theory does: /xx/, /___ (zero-case), /x, and /xx. Against that data, the Consistent Rhythm Theory produces better results not just for all five segments in this table, but also for /xxx/, /xxxx/, ___/ (zero-case), x/, xx/, and xxxx/.

Chapter Four: Dynamic 'Unmetre' and the Proscription against Three Sequential Iambs

'Unmetre' is what George Saintsbury calls William Langland's prosodic system.[158] There is in many quarters little more regard for the metrical precision in *Cleanness* and *Patience*. For example, the prospect of variable numbers of beats, validated in Chapter Three of the present study, perplexes readers and discourages them from considering the arrangement of prominent and less prominent syllables systematic. Readers' knee-jerk reaction that variation in beat-counts precludes metrical regularity bucks against the reality that modern measured English poetic license also allows for the extension of lines. As Chapter Three showed, varying beat-counts can be a part of rhythmic consistency. The emphasis there was on sum totals of verse-segments throughout the corpus. Occurrence of a dip of a particular length on one side of the caesura or another was the key fact. Chapter Five will focus in part on the legitimacy of certain types of dips in total isolation. The present chapter covers the middle ground between Chapter Three's broad view and Chapter Five's narrower view. In the context of a discussion of the relation between rhythm and meter, this chapter examines sequences of dips (with requisite beats separating them).[159] Two principles emerge. First, clashing metrical stresses are flanked by dips that are

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[158] George Saintsbury, *A History of English Prosody From the Twelfth Century to the Present Day*, 3 vols (London: Macmillan, 1906-10), vol. I, p. 186.

[159] In the context of a study of dips, designation of pairs of dips as 'neighboring', 'juxtaposed', 'consecutive', or 'right next to each other' may be clear enough, but perhaps has the potential to imply some kind of absolute juxtaposition of dips, with nothing at all intervening. By definition, though, individual dips can be 'truly next to' only beats and verse boundaries. Two dips cannot ever be in 'absolute juxtaposition' to each other since by definition they then would count as exactly one dip. 'Sequential' will be the term used to refer to dips separated by exactly one beat.

different in length from each other. Second, strings of three sequential dips cannot comprise three dips that all have the same number of syllables. This second principle covers many scenarios. Several sequential iambs and several sequential 'triple feet' ('anapests' or 'dactyls') cannot occur. This terminology of metrical feet, of course, is more at home in discussions of English syllable-stress meter, but the unsuitability of the terminology is actually in line with the principle. It is exactly the organization of Chaucer and others that the *Gawain*-poet seeks to avoid.

Concentrating on sequential dips creates the possibility of identifying specific local rhythmic principles and metrical requirements. A discussion of the relation of rhythm and meter in medieval English literature can facilitate this endeavor. Metrists have addressed the relation between rhythm and meter in the context of Old English verse. John C. Pope positions himself against Sievers by claiming that Sievers' five Old English verse types imply 'a crude, "barbarous" rhythm'.[160] On the other hand Pope praises some of Sievers' early work:

> The characteristic sequences of syllables, long and short, stressed and unstressed, were established once for all, and were classified in a convenient if not altogether indisputable form. Indeed, the descriptive portion of Sievers' work is fundamentally sound, and must always be of service.[161]

Pope considers his own theory a better approximation of the rhythm of Old English poetry than Sievers'. Pope certainly extends Sievers' work by cataloguing more thoroughly the

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[160] Pope, *Rhythm*, p. 7. In the present section of the study, 'Pope' refers only to this twentieth-century metrist; other parts of the dissertation discuss eighteenth-century poet Alexander Pope.
[161] Pope, *Rhythm*, p. 6.

multitude of rhythmic patterns in *Beowulf*. His work, though, is detrimentally tied to unfounded assumptions about the temporal lengths of verses and syllables; his rhythmical additions must be factored out. In spite of Pope's objections, Sievers actually can be said to have gone further to shed light on the rhythm of Old English poetry since he provided a catalogue of the patterns of primarily metrically stressed, secondarily metrically stressed, and metrically unstressed syllables that occur in the poetry. Contrary to Pope's assertions, Sievers' contribution was to provide a rhythmic profile of the poetry.

John C. Pope is correct that there are shortcomings in Sievers' work, but the shortcomings do not have to do with the scholarship's credentials vis-à-vis rhythmic accuracy. Sievers' work was productive since it exhaustively recorded the rhythm of Old English verse. Later work, such as Cable's in *The Meter and Melody of Beowulf*, states the complexities of Sievers in a simplified form.[162] This simplified form can be considered the 'meter' to Sievers' record of the rhythm.

The present chapter aims similarly to distill Chapter Three's portrait of Middle English alliterative rhythms, to provide simple statements about patterns of beats and offbeats that subsume earlier observations. The rhythm of the poetry, which has to do with the broad view of patterns of beats and offbeats, and of which tallies of types of dips are one kind of characterization, was covered in Chapter Three. Using the rhythmic profile to establish the legitimacy of the a-verse's varying beat-counts has made the search for simpler statements about the patterns remarkably straightforward. This chapter will take the characterization of Middle English alliterative verse further than the rhythmic

[162] Cable, *Meter*.

characterization of Chapter Three. It will identify patterns with an eye toward identifying simpler principles that qualify as metrical rules.

Rhythm is more patient than meter in that the former tolerates the ebbs and flows of pattern scarcity and pattern abundance; meter's demands are immediate and simply shunned or met. A rhythm comprises a multitude of syllable patterns. Particular patterns approximate more or less closely the most common patterns; whether close to the core or not, such patterns might be said to fall within the rhythm's orbit. The patterns of prominences that least resemble the most common patterns orbit at a distance and at great risk of full release into a different rhythm. If such patterns are still within the orbit, though, there always will be a path back to the core. It takes formidable departure to break out of the orbit. Three straight lines of only three-syllable dips would, like a heavy mass orbiting at too great a speed, break out of the rhythm.

The source of the word *rhythm* reinforces this conception of rhythm as tolerant of modulation. The word comes from Latin *rhythmus* 'measured flow of words or phrases in prose' (< Greek *ῥύθμός* 'measured motion') and from the 16th-century Middle French word *rythme* 'measured flow'.[163] *The Harvard Dictionary of Music* gives a similar etymology and indicates also that some believe the Greek source to be a word meaning 'uphold/maintain'.[164] For one definition, the one relevant to the present discussion, this dictionary gives 'a patterned configuration of attacks that may or may not be constrained

[163] *OED Online*, ed. by Simpson, 'rhythm, *n.*'.
[164] Don Michael Randel, ed., *The Harvard Dictionary of Music*, 4th edn, Harvard University Press Reference Library (Cambridge, Massachusetts, and London, England: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2003), 'Rhythm', pp. 723-29 (723).

overall by a meter or associated with a particular tempo'.[165] Technically, differentiation in patterns constitutes change in rhythm. Properly, therefore, we might speak of the plural rhythms of Middle English alliterative verse since dip-lengths vary. Iambic pentameter also exhibits multiple rhythms, and not just because of the occasional multisyllabic dip. On top of the binary alternation of x/x/x/x/x/ some beats inevitably will attract more accent than other beats and some offbeats will recede further into the background than other offbeats; especially in performance, multiple rhythms will be present even in iambic pentameter.

Middle English alliterative verse exhibits some characteristic collections (analogous to the 'orbit' mentioned above) of rhythms and does not exhibit other collections of rhythms. In the Consistent Rhythm Theory, the various kinds of dips (i.e., dips of one, two, and three syllables as well as the theorized 'zero-dips' between clashing metrical stresses) are well represented in the collection of rhythms. The two-beat theory, on the other hand, implies a high proportion of three-syllable dips. The two-beat theory also implies an extreme scarcity of clashing metrical stresses. The Consistent Rhythm Theory posited in Chapter Three calls for steady accumulation of characteristic proportions of types of beats. The two-beat theory, on the other hand, implies crowded a-verses (i.e., a-verses with more than two candidates for metrical stress) that buck against the rhythm.

Rhythmic anomalies amidst general rhythmic consistency often reflect specific metrical consistencies. The puzzling distribution of adjacent metrical stresses in the corpus is a good example of this incongruity between rhythmic anomaly and metrical continuity.

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[165] Since the dictionary focuses on music, one must assume the authors have in mind musical meter here, though the definition seems to admit of understanding 'meter' to refer to 'poetic meter' as well.

The distribution of some patterns of metrical stress seems at first to call into question the assumption of rhythmic consistency. As Chapter Three shows, these clashing metrical stresses occur almost not at all in standard a-verses (in 1% of all standard a-verses); frequently in crowded a-verses (constituting 8% of all /___/ segments and occurring in 16% of all crowded a-verses); and occasionally in b-verses (in 9% of all b-verses). It would be helpful to identify a metrical reason for these disparities. A reader familiar with Middle English alliterative metrics might hypothesize that they are part of the metrical rule that the patterns of the a- and b-verses are mutually exclusive. One cannot accept them as evidence of a 'norm' that helps to differentiate a-verse metrical patterns from b-verse metrical patterns: The absence of clashing metrical stress in standard a-verses against the occurrence of clashing metrical stress in nearly one of every ten b-verses constitutes such a rhythmic disparity that it is not plausible as a simple metrical constraint.

There is a line-wide pattern that, in combination with known verse-specific metrical constraints, may help explain this puzzling distribution of clashing metrical stress. There is a remarkable scarcity of clashing metrical stresses flanked by two-syllable dips (scanned xx//xx) anywhere in the long line. Current knowledge of b-verse meter allows us to verify immediately the absence of the pattern from the second half-line. The pattern xx//xx is unacceptable in the b-verse because it would entail a line-final two-syllable dip, which is prohibited. As for the a-verse, the scarcity of any clashing metrical stress at all in standard a-verses makes the total absence of the special case xx//xx unsurprising.[166] Surprisingly, the

[166] Technically, to say that xx//xx does not occur would be to make a statement that is slightly too broad. Such a statement erroneously suggests that patterns like xxx//xx do not occur. The precisely correct observation is that |xx//xx| does not occur, where a bar (|)

pattern is also scarce in the crowded a-verse. In the corpus' two thousand verses, there are only two clear exceptions:

x x / / x x / / x

Bot as smylt mele vnder smal siue smokeȝ for þikke

'Yet, as [a] sardine dinner under [a] fine broth smokes with thickness'

C.226

x x / / x x /

Forþy so semly to see syþen wern none

'Therefore, none were so fair to be seen then.'

C.262a

Underlying the seeming rhythmic imbalance in the distribution of clashing metrical stress in the long line—the minuscule frequency of clashing metrical stress in standard a-verses against the higher frequency in crowded a-verses and in the second half-line—is at least one metrical principle that actually suggests a kind of balance. The crowded a-verse avoids flanking clashing metrical stresses with two-syllable dips as reliably as the standard a-verse and the b-verse do; therefore, the paucity of clashing metrical stress in standard a-verses begins to seem more like a product of a general principle rather than some kind of environment-specific exception to allowance of the pattern.

The scarcity of xx//xx is only one of a class of metrical phenomena, a class that itself is one among multiple classes of 'heteromorphic' phenomena. It can be said generally that

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denotes either a verse boundary or a beat, but not a metrically unstressed syllable. In order to simplify exposition in this chapter, schematic representations have been used infrequently and, where such representations appear, the bars are omitted but implied.

differentiation, rather than exact repetition, of metrical forms characterizes the Middle English alliterative long line. That separate metrists have endeavored to appropriate the word 'heteromorphic' as a dedicated term for what actually are clearly separate kinds of heteromorphicity attests to the variety and pervasiveness of heteromorphicity in this poetry. In an article on Middle English alliterative poetry, Angus McIntosh writes, 'I shall use *heteromorphic* to designate rhythmical material in which the basic "foot" units have a number of different forms."[167] Rather than dips (or feet) of unvarying length, there are in this poetry different dip-lengths over the course of the long line. Ralph Hanna associates the term 'heteromorphic' with: 1) dips of varying lengths across the entire long line (a meaning that corresponds to McIntosh's use); and 2) dips of varying lengths even within the smaller domain of the b-verse.[168] Yakovlev's definition of 'heteromorphicity' is similar to Hanna's second definition, but somewhat more specific. Yakovlev writes, '*Heteromorphic* is used in the thesis only in Duggan's restricted sense of "having one and only one strong dip either before the first lift or between the lifts of a two-lift verse."'[169] In saying that, with some exceptions, the b-verse is heteromorphic and that the a-verse is not, Yakovlev uses the term

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[167] Angus McIntosh, 'Early Middle English Alliterative Verse', in *Middle English Alliterative Poetry and Its Literary Background: Seven Essays*, ed. by David Lawton (Cambridge, UK: D. S. Brewer, 1982), chap. 2, pp. 20-33 (21).
[168] Hanna, 'Defining', pp. 45-6.
[169] See Yakovlev, *Development*, pp. 90 (especially n. 3), 96. He uses the term 'lift' for what the present study refers to as a 'beat'. He does not indicate the exact source of the Duggan quotation. In a preceding note, *Development*, p. 90 n. 2, Yakovlev cites five of Duggan's articles. Electronic searches of three of these, Duggan, 'Shape', Duggan, 'Final -e', and Duggan, 'Stress', turn up neither the term *heteromorphic* nor the Duggan quotation; the quotation may come from either Hoyt N. Duggan, 'Langland's Dialect and Final -e', *Studies in the Age of Chaucer,* 12 (1990), pp. 157-91, or Hoyt N. Duggan, 'Notes Toward a Theory of Langland's Meter', *Yearbook of Langland Studies,* 1 (1987), pp. 41-70, but searches of the hard copies of these articles did not turn up the term or phrase.

for the precise kind of dip differentiation that must occur in the b-verse. Finally, Cable suggests moving the concept 'up to the next level of abstraction, the half-line, so that the a-verse and the b-verse can be said to be in a heteromorphic relationship'.[170] He calls attention to the fact that not only do dips vary in length within the domain of the long line and even within the domain of the b-verse in a highly specific way, but a-verse metrical patterns and b-verse metrical patterns come from mutually exclusive sets of possible patterns. The present study has used the phrase 'metrical differentiation of the two half-lines' to refer to this phenomenon. McIntosh's, Hanna's, Yakovlev's, Duggan's, and Cable's observations demonstrate the long line's multifaceted heteromorphicity.

Like Hanna's second kind of heteromorphicity and the specific b-verse pattern for which Yakovlev uses the term heteromorphicity, absence of xx//xx from the long line is a heteromorphic tendency. Given the proclivity for differentiation of metrical forms, the symmetry of xx//xx may well have doomed this particular metrical pattern to disuse. Although some readers of the poetry might consider the absence of xx//xx one of the inevitable vagaries that any corpus is bound to manifest, the exclusion of the pattern is at least consistent with the principle of heteromorphicity just described; moreover, this observation about xx//xx has value as a foothold in identifying a full class of heteromorphic tendencies in Middle English alliterative meter.

Further analysis shows that patterns of distribution of clashing metrical stress generalize beyond the eschewal of xx//xx:

[170] Cable, 'Progress', 263.

Clashing Asymmetry Principle: Throughout the long line, clashing metrical stress can occur only between two dips that are different from each other in length.[171]

Once again, it is immediately clear that the b-verse observes this principle: According to the b-verse metrical rules stated in Chapter One, clashing metrical stress in the b-verse can only come between the verse's sole multisyllabic dip and the verse's required verse-final one-syllable dip. As for standard a-verses, x//x, xx//xx, and xxx//xxx do not occur, but since clashing stress is so scarce in standard a-verses to begin with, observance of the principle there is not statistically remarkable. The main value of this generalization is that it states that the described pattern is missing from crowded a-verses too. Notice that in the following a-verses, two dips of two different lengths flank each pair of clashing metrical stresses:

x / x x x / / x

And **h**oneste in his **h**ous**h**olde and **h**agherlych serued

'And noble in his household and appropriately served'

C.18

[171] If one considers the position between clashing metrical stresses a dip of length zero, then the Clashing Asymmetry Principle amounts to this principle: Clashing metrical stress in the corpus, except when occurring at verse boundaries, always frames a series of three dips of three different lengths. For example, the clashing metrical stresses in the pattern xx//xxx frame a two-syllable dip, a zero-dip, and a three-syllable dip. The verse-boundary exception simply allows for the fact that in a single a-verse both the dip between the clashing metrical stresses and the dip between one of the metrical stresses and a verse-boundary can be zero, as in a pattern such as //xx/x.

x / / x x / x

What kyn folk so þer fare feche3 hem hider

'Whatever kind of folk go there bring them here'

C.100

x / / x x x / x

Þe sex hundreth of his age and none odde 3ere3

'In the six hundredth year of his age and with no odd years'

C.426

There are some apparent exceptions to the Clashing Asymmetry Principle:

x x / x / / x

For desert of sum sake

'For retribution for some offence'

P.84a

x / x / / x

A lodes-mon ly3tly lep vnder hachches

'A steersman nimbly leapt under [the] hatches'

P.179

x x / / x x /

Forþy so semly to see syþen wern none

'Therefore, none were so fair to be seen then.'

C.262a

x / / x / x x

In **d**ry3 **d**red and **d**aunger þat **d**urst **d**o non oþer

With enduring awe and submission, he who dared do nothing else

C.342

Yakovlev's observation of the metrically significant difference between full vowels and reduced vowels in monosyllabic dips may explain P.179a: Although the dips adjacent to the clashing metrical stresses are both monosyllabic, one has a reduced vowel and the other has the full vowel *-y*. Where 'o' stands for a full vowel, the pattern there is x//o instead of x//x. C.342a may also be reconcilable with the proposed principle. The derivation of *daunger* from Old French *dangier* makes shift of metrical stress to the second syllable possible.[172] Chaucer corroborates such a reading:

x / x / x / x / x /

Frely, withouten raunson or daunger

Chaucer, CT.'Knight's Tale'.1849 (1386-1400)

Similarly, shift of metrical stress to the first syllable in *desert* would salvage P.84a by creating the pattern x/xx//x.

The observation that the poet avoided symmetry around clashing metrical stresses opens the door to other observations of heteromorphic tendencies. One can ask whether

[172] Note also the etymology of C.342a *dry3*: < ON; cf. OI *drjúgr*. This verse is one of many in which treating a monosyllable derived from an ON word ending in a consonant plus *–r* as a disyllable explains otherwise metrically exceptional verses. In this case, the extra syllable on *dry3* would disqualify *dry3 dred* as an example of clashing metrical stress and, thus, C.342a as a violation of the Clashing Asymmetry Principle. An exploration of the borrowing of such ON words into medieval English lies beyond the scope of this chapter.

three sequential dips, all of the same length, can frame two beats. If one begins this inquiry by considering one-syllable dips, then one would do well to consider Chaucer's metrical patterns and the *Gawain*-poet's other meters as benchmarks. In Chaucer, lines with dips of exactly one syllable and with dips of no other length are the norm, nearly the inviolable rule. In fact, 97% of Chaucer's ten-syllable lines have dips of only one syllable; only 3% of the lines have any dips at all longer than one metrically unstressed syllable.[173] The dip-lengths in *Pearl*, one of the *Gawain*-poet's other works, are differentiated much more often. In *Rum, Ram, Ruf, and Rym: Middle English Alliterative Meters*, Cole shows that only 69% of the first three hundred lines in *Pearl* exhibit Chaucerian even alternation. For example, x/x/x/x/x can occur, as in:

x / x / x / x / x

Now tech me to þat myry mote

'Lead me now to that excellent city'

Pearl.936

Such extended iambic passages are less common in *Pearl* than they are in Chaucer, though. Nearly one hundred of the three hundred lines that Cole surveyed have at least one irreducible two-syllable dip. Avoidance of iambic regularity appears also in the bob-and-wheel that ends stanzas in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*. The bob-and-wheel is a five-line end-rhymed passage. It comes after a group of unrhymed alliterative long lines (which

[173] Martin J. Duffel, 'Chaucer, Gower, and the History of the Hendecasyllable', in *English Historical Metrics*, ed. by C. B. McCully and J. J. Anderson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), chap. 13, pp. 210-18 (218), in Kristin Lynn Cole, *Rum, Ram, Ruf, and Rym: Middle English Alliterative Meters* (unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Texas at Austin, 2007), pp. 133-34.

vary in number from stanza to stanza) and consists of one line of exactly one beat, the bob, and four lines of exactly three beats, the wheels. Of the 404 individual lines in the wheels, 70% are perfectly iambic while 30% have at least one dip of two syllables.[174] In SGGK, extended iambic passages are limited to only three beats (x/x/x/x) and limited in frequency relative to Chaucerian poetry. Here is an example of an iambic wheel:

x / x / x / x

So did alle þat þer were

'So did all who were there'

SGGK.320

In the one-beat bobs, the iambic rhythm occurs quite frequently, nearly 100% of the time, but the shortness of the lines keeps any kind of extended iambic rhythm from occurring. In one way or another, the *Gawain*-poet avoids extended repetition of dip-lengths in *Pearl*, in SGGK's wheels, and in SGGK's bobs.

Cleanness and *Patience* tolerate longer iambic patterns than are found in the short bob of SGGK, but do not tolerate as much iambic patterning as readers find in the SGGK wheels and throughout *Pearl* (let alone Chaucer's meters). Differentiation in lengths of sequential dips emerges as a guiding principle in all crowded a-verses, not just ones with clashing metrical stress. Consider all of the crowded a-verses in the first one hundred lines of *Cleanness*. If one examines the four dips that frame the three beats in each verse below, some interesting patterns emerge.[175] Every one of the verses has at least one dip that is one

[174] Cole, *Rum*, p. 130.

[175] The verses that begin with beats are assumed to have zero-syllable dips in the first position.

syllable long. Several have as many as three one-syllable dips. In spite of what seems to be ample opportunity, though, none of these verses has a series of three sequential monosyllabic dips (muchless a series of our consecutive monosyllabic dips). Here are all of the crowded a-verses in the first one hundred lines of the poem:

/ x / x x x / x

Fayre **f**orme3 my3t he **f**ynde in **f**orþering his speche

'Splendid themes could he find for fashioning his speech'

C.3

x / x / x x / x

For **w**onder **w**roth is þe **w**y3 þat **w**ro3t alle þinges

'For exceedingly angry is the God who created all things'

C.5

x / x x x / x / x

Þay **h**ondel þer his **a**une **b**ody and **v**sen hit boþe

'They handle there his own body and receive it as well'

C.11

x x x / x x / / x

Þer as he **h**euened **a**3t **h**appe3 and **h**y3t hem **h**er mede3

'In which he praised eight blessings and promised the rewards for them'

C.24

/ x / x x / x

Þe **h**aþel clene of his **h**ert **h**apene3 ful fayre

'The man pure in his heart is blessed very abundantly'

C.27

x / x / x x x /

With rent **c**okre3 at þe **k**ne and his **c**lutte trasche3

'With leggings ripped at the knee and his trousers patched'

C.40

/ x x / / x

Hurled to þe **h**alle dore and **h**arde þer**o**ute schowued

'Hurled to the hall-door and shoved firmly thereout'

C.44

x / x / x x x / x

As **M**aþew **m**ele3 in his **m**asse of þat **m**an ryche

'As Matthew tells in his mass-gospel about that wealthy man'

C.51

x / x / x x / x x

Þat **m**ade þe **m**ukel **m**angerye to **m**arie his here dere

'Who arranged the great banquet to marry his beloved heir'

C.52

x x / x x x / x /

My polyle þat is penne-fed and partryke3 boþe

'My poultry, which is fed in the pen and partridges too'

C.57

x / x x / x /x

Wyth schelde3 of wylde swyn swane3, and crone3

'With slices of wild swine, swans, and cranes'

C.58

/ x /x x x / x

Come3 cof to my corte er hit colde worþe

'Come quickly to my court before it becomes cold'

C.60

x / x / x x /

To see hem pulle in þe plow aproche me byhoue3

'To see them pull at the plow I am obliged to be close by'

C.68

/x / x x / x

Boþe burne3 and burde3 þe better and þe wers

'Both men and women, the better and the worse'

C.80

x / x x / x x / x

And **b**rynge3 hem **b**lyþly to **b**or3e as **b**aroune3 þay were

'And bring them merrily to [this] dwelling as if they were barons'

C.82

x / / x x / x

What kyn **f**olk so þer **f**are **f**eche3 hem hider

'Whatever kind of folk go there bring them here'

C.100

The absence of three sequential monosyllabic dips in this small sample turns out to be a heteromorphic tendency that characterizes the whole corpus. This is true not only in crowded a-verses, but also in standard a-verses and all b-verses. We may, therefore, propose the proscription of three sequential monosyllabic dips. The following principle will be further generalized later in this chapter:

> Limit on Sequential Iambs: In the a-verse, no more than two iambs can occur sequentially. In the b-verse, iambs never occur sequentially.[176]

In two thousand verses, there is only one apparent exception to the Limit on Sequential Iambs:

[176] The Limit on Sequential Iambs can be represented schematically as *x/x/x or, more precisely, as *|x/x/x|.

* / x / x / x

Hare3, **h**ertte3 **a**lso to þe **h**y3e runnen

'Hares, [and] harts also, ran to the high hills'

C.391

Shift of metrical stress on *also* (< OE *alswā*), of course, would account for this apparent anomaly:

/ x / x x /

Hare3, **h**ertte3 **a**lso to þe **h**y3e runnen

C.391[177]

Chaucer shows that nothing inherent in Middle English prevents indefinitely long stretches of even alternation of beats and offbeats. The avoidance of three sequential iambs seems then to be a guiding metrical principle in Middle English alliterative verse. The Limit on Sequential Iambs, moreover, fits well into the general pattern of heteromorphicity exhibited by the differentiation of dip-lengths within the long line and within the b-verse; the principle of metrical differentiation of the two half-lines; and the Clashing Asymmetry Principle.

[177] Just as Yakovlev's reduced/full vowel distinction may help to explain exceptions to this chapter's Clashing Asymmetry Principle, the distinction may shed light on the exception to the Limit on Sequential Iambs. It may be the case that the full vowel at the end of *also* would change the /x/x/x pattern to /x/x/o, where 'o' represents a full vowel. This pattern perhaps also avoids the proscribed three sequential single-syllable dips. In this case, to allow for such patterns, the Limit on Sequential Iambs would have to be modified to proscribe a smaller set of patterns, namely three sequential single-syllable dips with reduced vowels.

The a-verse and b-verse observe the Limit on Sequential Iambs via different mechanisms. The b-verse simply has a fairly strict template. Since the b-verse always must have a multisyllabic dip (which occurs either before or after the first beat), there is never any question of extended even alternation. Even in cases where the required multisyllabic dip comes at the beginning of the b-verse and where the second dip has exactly one syllable (i.e., where full b-verse patterns are xx/x/x or xxx/x/x), the number of sequential one-syllable dips is firmly limited to two sequential one-syllable dips. Strictly speaking, two true iambs never occur sequentially in the b-verse. The b-verse meter strictly prohibits extended even alternation of beats and offbeats.

As Chapter Two shows, the b-verse meter often directly eliminates extended even alternation of beats and offbeats in crowded b-verses. Through demotion of one of three candidates for ictus, patterns of inferred linguistic accent like UAUAUAU and AUAUAU become metrical patterns like x/xxx/x, xxx/x/x, /xxx/x, and xx/x/x. Most b-verse demotions, in fact, reduce even alternation in some way, and four of the verses would have as many as four sequential monosyllabic dips without demotion. Regular changes in dip-lengths fall out as a matter of course due to the b-verse meter.

The b-verse meter dodges another kind of brush with extended even alternation. Sometimes b-verses seem at first to end in metrically stressed, truly monosyllabic words, such as the personal pronoun *me* at the end of P.485b below. A reader might be inclined to assign metrical stress to such a verse-final word, and out of the context of a Middle English alliterative poem such a reading might seem correct. Within the context of the poem though, with its strict requirement of exactly one line-final metrically unstressed

syllable, such a reading is unacceptable. Observing the meter in these cases often sidesteps verse-final iambs, like the one in xxx/x/, giving xxx//x instead.

* x x x / x /

x x x / / x

I **k**euered me a **c**umfort þat now is **c**aȝt fro me

'I obtained for myself one consolation that now is taken from me'

P.485

Chaucer's use of one-syllable words as line-final offbeats supports this reading of P.485b. He uses the word *me* itself at the end of one line from *The Canterbury Tales*:

That streight was comen fro the court of Rome.

x / x / x / x / x

Ful loude he soong 'Com hider, love, to me!'

Chaucer, CT.'General Prologue'.671-2 (1386-1400)

Ten Brink writes that Chaucer 'takes the liberty of treating a sonorous vowel [as] weak *e*, as in the well-known rimes—*Rṓme* : *to me*, *youthe* : *allow the*'.[178] One might object to using Chaucer as support for the reading of P.485b *fro me*. The objection goes that it is Chaucer's iambic pentameter template that makes his line-final arrangements possible. A review of the operation of metrical templates, though, undercuts this objection. Templates come in degrees of strength, and they are admittedly strong in Chaucer, particularly at the end of a line. The coercive influence of Chaucer's x/x/x/x/x/(x) template derives from the reinforcement that hundreds of other surrounding lines provide. Potentially puzzling

[178] ten Brink, *Chaucers*, p. 238.

arrangements like the one at the end of General Prologue 672 above fall into a x/x/x/x/x/x pattern, instead of a x/x/x/x/xx/ pattern, because hundreds of nearby lines have established the former pattern as normal and the latter as extraordinarily unusual. The last two syllables of the Middle English alliterative long line answer to a metrical template no less coercive than Chaucer's. Because all other surrounding long lines end with the pattern .../x, P.485b must too. Although the template elements are weaker in the long line's a-verse and only moderately coercive early in the b-verse, they wield formidable influence in the last two syllables of the long line.

A near-miss with two sequential iambs in the b-verse occurs in another way. Sometimes apparent linguistic word accent conflicts with the metrical requirement of the line-final /x pattern. Shifts of metrical stress align the patterns of prominence with b-verse meter and have the additional merit that they avoid the verse-initial evenly alternating pattern x/x/:

* x /x / x x

x /x x / x

Thay arn **h**appen þat **h**an in **h**ert pouerte

'Blessed are they who have poverty of heart'

P.13

* x / x / x x x[179]

x / x x x / x

Þay ar happen also þat haunte mekenesse

'Blessed are they also who practice meekness'

P.15

Shifts of metrical stress like the one in P.13b *pouerte* are evident in Chaucer, where the word sometimes gets metrical stress on the first syllable and sometimes on the second:

x / x / x / x / x /

That I wol lyve in poverte wilfully?

Nay, nay, I thoghte it nevere, trewely!

'Am I to choose to live in poverty?

It's never crossed my mind—not bloody likely!'

Chaucer, CT.'The Pardoner's Prologue'.441-2 (1386-1400)

x / x / x / x / x / x

Whoso that halt hym payd of his poverte,

I holde hym riche, al hadde he nat a sherte.

'Whoever is contented with his lot,

Poor as it is, I count him to be rich,

Though he may have no shirt upon his back'[180]

Chaucer, CT.'The Wife of Bath's Tale'.1185-6 (1386-1400)

[179] *Mekenesse* < Old Icelandic *mjúkr*.

[180] Chaucer, *Canterbury Tales*, ed. and trans. by David Wright, pp. 248-9, gives a three-line translation for Chaucer's couplet.

Like the b-verse, the a-verse minimizes iambic repetition. The meter in the first half-line allows two sequential iambs, but not three. Two-iamb patterns are most common in crowded a-verses. The b-verse's reliance on demotion for compliance with the Limit on Sequential Iambs is not matched in the a-verse; instead, there is a built-in multisyllabic dip in the a-verse full of syllables that cannot become beats. Inoue and Stokes observe that, in crowded a-verses, only 'rarely' are there fewer than two metrically unstressed syllables between the second and third candidates for ictus.[181] This common sequence of at least two metrically unstressed syllables disrupts an alternating rhythm. Inoue and Stokes provide the following examples from *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*:[182]

* .../ x x x /

Þe bor3 brittened and brent to brondez and askez

'The city smashed and burned to brands and ashes'

SGGK.2

* .../ x x / x

My hede fla3 to my fote, and 3et fla3 I neuer

'My head flew to my feet, and still I never flinched'

SGGK.2276

In addition to Inoue and Stokes' many examples from SGGK, there is a multitude of examples of the crowded a-verse's reliable multisyllabic dip in the present study's corpus:

[181] Inoue and Stokes, 'Caesura', p. 5.
[182] The scansions cover only the parts of the verse where Inoue and Stokes are in accordance with the present analysis.

x x / x / x x /

Bot þat oþer wrake þat wex on wyȝeȝ hit lyȝt

'Yet, that other disaster that came upon people developed'

C.235

x / x / x x /

And lengest lyf in hem lent of ledeȝ alle oþer

'And longest life remained in them of all other men'

C.256

/ x / x x x / x

Þe aþel auncetereȝ suneȝ þat Adam watȝ called

'The noble sons of the ancestor who was called Adam'

C.258

Inoue and Stokes view these occurrences of a multisyllabic dip in crowded a-verses as support for their theory that the a-verse never has more than two beats. This multisyllabic dip is more properly viewed, though, as an obligatory disruption of iambic patterning.

The notion of 'obligatory disruption' has a strong precedent in medieval English metrics. In 'Broken Cadences in *Beowulf*', Ruth Lehmann demonstrates just such systematic metrical disruption in Old English poetry.[183] She rehearses the variegated legacy of Indo-European verse, which served as the foundation for multiple languages' verse forms. Lehmann describes the verse of one of Indo-European's daughter languages, Old

[183] Ruth Preston M. Lehmann, 'Broken Cadences in Beowulf', *English Studies,* 56 (1975), pp. 1-13.

Irish, as 'stichic' and as having 'cadences', by which she means that metrical forms remain the same from line to line. Old English verse, in contrast, avoids such repetition. The 'most perfect' metrical repetition in *Beowulf,* in fact, comes only in the last two long lines of the 3182-line poem, where 'the establishment of any pattern impossible'.[184] She asserts, 'To make a sweeping generalization now, Old English verse is unrhythmic—deliberately so. Indeed, like patterns of adjacent verses are carefully avoided.'[185] The avoidance of even alternation in Middle English alliterative a- and b-verses is neither idiosyncratic nor incidental, but ensconced in English poetic tradition and, like the 'broken cadences' of Old English poetry, central to the meter.

The obligatory metrical disruption in Middle English alliterative poetry breaks up what is more properly called *extended* even alternation. The /x that occurs at the end of every long line and the /x/x that occurs at the end of nearly two hundred of the one thousand long lines in the corpus technically exhibit alternation between metrically stressed and metrically unstressed syllables:

x x / x / x

Waltes out vch **w**alle-heued in ful **w**ode streme3

'[Water] springs out from every source in very wild streams'

C.364

[184] Lehmann, 'Broken', p. 8.

[185] Lehmann, 'Broken', p. 6. To denote a lack of rigid cadence within a meter, Lehmann uses the term 'unrhythmic'. The present study, especially Chapter Three, argues that the poetry is better characterized as observing metrical differentiation within rhythmic consistency.

x x / x / x

Þe mukel lauande logh to þe lyfte rered

'The powerful, pouring water mounted toward the heavens'

C.366

x x /x / x

Ouerwalteȝ vche a wod and þe wyde feldeȝ

'Overflows every wood and the wide fields'

C.370

Limited alternation certainly is permitted. At the other extreme, a long sequence of alternation, such as x/x/x/x/x/x is so rhythmically anomalous and so uncommon that proposing to proscribe it would be unhelpful. As the pattern grows in length from /x to /x/x to x/x/x/x/x/x, its status changes from permissible and common to proscribed.

Comparing the present corpus to other poetry can help to contextualize Middle English alliterative verse's threshold of permissibility of the even alternation of beats and offbeats. First, it can be useful to compare the proportion of all dips that are multisyllabic in *Cleanness* and *Patience*, 43%, to the proportions in other types of verse. This rate of frequency is squarely within the range of proportions of multisyllabic dips in what Marina Tarlinskaja has called dolnik verse.[186] Even though *Cleanness* and *Patience* rigorously avoid extended iambic sequences, they actually come closer to pure iambic rhythms than poetry often assumed to be more regular. Consider some of the poems Tarlinskaja identifies as having frequencies of multisyllabic dips higher than 43%: Lord Alfred Tennyson's 'Maud';

[186] Marina G. Tarlinskaja, *Strict Stress-Meter in English Poetry Compared with German and Russian* (Calgary: University of Calgary Press, 1993), pp. 213-17.

William Butler Yeats' 'Into the Twilight', Robert Browning's 'Garden Fancies', and Robert Frost's 'Lines Written in Dejection on the Eve of Great Success' and 'In Time of Cloudburst'.

Like Tarlinskaja's tallies, Stewart's research on iambic-anapestic verse lends support to the notion that Middle English alliterative verse falls in the middle of a continuum of degrees of iambic patterning. Iambic regularity peaked from 1650 to 1800, most famously in Alexander Pope's poetry. In what Stewart calls 'a revolt from the monotonous regularity of later eighteenth century verse', the nineteenth century brought variety in dip-lengths.[187] Stewart perceives a minimum acceptable frequency of multisyllabic dips, a kind of critical mass, above which the reader readily accepts departures from even alternation; below this minimum frequency, the reader 'is unpleasantly surprised when his expectation is suddenly proved unwarranted'.[188] Stewart gives a general rule for minimum frequency:

> With regard to the proportion of two- [iambic] and three-syllable [anapestic] feet, one can only say that if the latter are used at all, they are generally used often enough to make their occurrence an expected part of the metrical pattern, that is, at least once in every two or three lines.[189]

Since in the present study's corpus a multisyllabic dip occurs in every line and since two multisyllabic dips occur in nearly every line, the frequency of multisyllabic dips in Middle English alliterative verse easily meets this standard. *Cleanness* and *Patience* thus have enough multisyllabic dips to set an expectation of multisyllabic dips, but many fewer

[187] Stewart, *Technique*, p. 61.
[188] Stewart, *Technique*, p. 57.
[189] Stewart, *Technique*, p. 57.

multisyllabic dips than many poems long regarded as metrically canonical within the iambic tradition.

In cutting off the even alternation of beats and offbeats after two iambs, Middle English alliterative poets suggest a notion of how many syllables it takes to establish an immediate expectation of continued alternation. The poets seem to have wanted to cut off alternation before the expectation is set. Their notion of this threshold, in turn, suggests a threshold for the establishment of any rhythm, whether a rhythm of alternating beats and offbeats, a rhythm of repeated anapests, or other rhythms. This analysis, then, can provide a foundation for work on how readers' rhythmic expectations modulate—when expectations variously solidify then dissipate—during readings of series of syllables.

One can go further than to say merely that there is a categorical proscription against three sequential iambs. There are conditional proscriptions against even two sequential one-syllable dips. The proscribed pattern may not be so simple as a single pattern of an exact length beginning at a specific point (offbeat or beat) in the pattern. Instead, the precise proscription might require specification of verse (a-verse or b-verse) and verse-location (verse-initial or verse-final) as well as pattern length. As Chapter Two shows, apparent verse-initial x/x/ patterns in the b-verse lead to demotion, but such a rhythm is acceptable at the beginning of a-verses. Scores of three-beat a-verses begin with two sequential iambs, such as:

x / x / x x / x x

To **d**ry3 her **d**elful **d**eystyne and **d**y3en alle samen

'To endure their terrible destiny and to die all the same'

C.400

x / x / x x /x

By **f**orty daye3 wern **f**aren on **f**olde no **f**lesch styryed

'When forty days had passed no creature stirred on earth'

C.403

x /x / x x x /x

Bot **f**lote **f**orthe with þe **f**lyt of þe **f**elle wynde3

'[It] only floated forth in the tumult of the fierce winds'

C.421

On the other hand, as Chapter Five will discuss further, few if any standard a-verses begin in this way, with two sequential iambs. Apparent exceptions to the rule (with patterns like x/x/xxx) usually turn out to be amenable to promotions that turn the verses into crowded a-verses (e.g., x/x/xx/) similar to the ones cited immediately above. This ready availability of promotable words means that it may prove fruitful to consider whether standard a-verses that begin with two iambs are proscribed. Stated the other way, it may be that only crowded a-verses can begin with two consecutive iambs. Such a rule would also imply that the number of verse-initial iambs must be lower than the number of beats in a verse, whether the crowded a-verse, the standard a-verse or the b-verse. A corollary would be that the number of iambs must be lower than the number of beats in a verse. In any case, two

sequential iambs, but not three, can open the a-verse. None of the one thousand a-verses begins with three sequential iambs.

The absence of a-verse-initial x/x/x|, a-verse-final |x/x/x, b-verse-initial x/x/, and b-verse-final |x/x/x indicates that vigilance against even alternation varies slightly over the course of the long line. Allowing for fully four perfectly alternating syllables early in the long line (x/x/...) and at the ends of all verses (.../x/x), the rhythm is relatively tolerant of even alternation early in the long line, before the caesura, and at line-end. The rhythm is most averse to even alternation at the beginning of the b-verse, where x/ is the closest thing to even alternation that can occur—hardly any alternation at all. In this respect, the Middle English alliterative poetic rhythm is most at risk of disruption at the beginning of the b-verse. It is at that part of the long line where the pattern of prominences must most closely approximate one of the meter's core, non-iambic patterns.

The Limit on Sequential Iambs helps to explain a perplexing difference between the standard a-verse, the b-verse, and the crowded a-verse. The 1000 b-verses have 195 repeated one-syllable dips (always in the form .../x/x and at the end of the verse), about 10% of the two thousand that are theoretically possible in any three-dip, two-beat meter. Standard a-verses have only 31 out of 1425 (2%); crowded a-verses have 137/867 (16%).[190] The percentages at first seem to represent a rhythmic disparity; in fact, though, they reflect a common principle, namely an optimal skirting of even alternation in each type of verse.

Short as it is, the standard a-verse can little afford to have any kind of even alternation without running the risk of throwing the reader out of the prevailing rhythm;

[190] Inoue and Stokes call for zero occurrences of sequential one-syllable dips in the a-verse, a figure that contrasts dramatically with the nearly two hundred occurrences in the b-verse.

hence, the figure of 2%. By this logic, one might expect the b-verse, which is even shorter than the a-verse, to avoid one-syllable dips more thoroughly. The 10% figure for the b-verse, then, is puzzling. The reason that the b-verse can afford to have a significantly larger number of two sequential one-syllable dips, though, is that its mandatory multisyllabic dip can be relied upon to break up even alternation. One should also keep in mind that two sequential one-syllable dips in the b-verse are always .../x/x, so they never constitute two sequential iambs. Sequential iamb avoidance seems to be the key principle. Finally, the crowded a-verse's approach to undisrupted even alternation translates to the highest percentage here, 16%, because it always has two additional dips available for disrupting even alternation. The difference in prevalence of two sequential one-syllable dips in the standard a-verse, the b-verse, and the crowded a-verse only distracts from the more important fact that a single principle obtains: All three verse types skirt the boundary of extended even alternation as closely as their own separate metrical constraints permit.

The Limit on Sequential Iambs accounts for another seeming imbalance between verse types. Initial scansions of crowded a-verses almost always have multisyllabic dips. All three crowded a-verses in this passage, for example, have multisyllabic dips:

x / x x x / x /x

He **s**lyde3 on a **s**loumbe-**s**lep **s**loghe vnder leues

x / / x x /

Whil God **w**ayned a **w**orme þat **w**rot vpe þe rote

x / x x x / x / x

And **w**yddered wat3 þe **w**od bynde bi þat þe **w**y3e **w**akned

'He slides into a deep sleep, slothful under [the] leaves,

While God sent a worm that dug up the root,

And the woodbine was withered by the time the man awakened'

P.466-68

In contrast, as Chapter Two shows, only a fraction of the crowded b-verses have multisyllabic dips prior to demotion. Template-motivated demotion in the b-verse has the additional merit that it cuts down on even alternation. The poet's tendency to put the crowded b-verse's extra candidate for metrical stress in a would-be multisyllabic dip (e.g., x/x/x́/x) often creates the threat of an even alternation. The prospect of a b-verse without a multisyllabic dip and the prospect of even alternation exert pressure to demote. The common principle of the avoidance of even alternation helps to explain why so few crowded b-verses have multisyllabic dips before demotion—if they did, there would be less pressure to demote to the clearly more desirable patterns.

In exploring the ramifications of the Limit on Sequential Iambs, it is good to remember that observations about dips of one length sometimes extend to dips of other lengths. Recall, for example, that the observation of the absence of xx//xx led to the more comprehensive Clashing Asymmetry Principle, which notes the absence of x//x, xx//xx, and xxx//xxx. It is wise, therefore, to proceed similarly in the light of the observations about repeated one-syllable dips.

The Limit on Sequential Iambs, one of a host of particular mechanisms for built-in metrical variation, points to other mechanisms, or, more accurately, a more general mechanism that subsumes it. Sequential two-syllable dips and sequential three-syllable dips,

it turns out, also occur less frequently than one might expect. The data suggests the following provisional principle:

> Limit on Sequential Equivalent Feet: In the a-verse, two sequential iambs cannot be followed immediately by an iamb, nor two anapests by an anapest, nor two quadruplet feet (xxx/xxx/) by a quadruplet foot.[191] In the b-verse, equivalent feet cannot occur sequentially at all: An iamb cannot follow an iamb, nor an anapest an anapest, nor a quadruplet a quadruplet.[192]

The Limit on Sequential Iambs is a corollary of this principle, simply the one-offbeat case. No a-verses (whether standard or crowded) have the metrical pattern x/x/x/, xx/xx/xx/, or xxx/xxx/xxx/. Of course, since several hundred of the a-verses have only two beats, this rule is mainly an observation about crowded a-verses. No b-verses in the corpus have x/x/, xx/xx/, or xxx/xxx/ metrical patterns. Of the several hundred standard a-verses, none has three sequential three-syllable dips and only six have three sequential two-syllable dips, all in *Patience*:

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[191] Ian Lancashire, 'Glossary of Poetic Terms', *Representative Poetry Online*, version 6.0 (University of Toronto Libraries, n.d.), Web, accessed 9 April 2012, <http://rpo.library.utoronto.ca/glossary>, suggests the term 'quadruplet' for a four-syllable foot.

[192] This observation of absolute absence of the pattern goes beyond the observations made by Duggan, 'Extended', pp. 64-5, of tendencies: 'Patterns such as x/x/x, xx/xx/xx, or xxx/xxx/xxx are very rare, and those that occur may well be suspected to spring from scribal corruption.... What does appear to have been felt strongly by the poets was a desire to produce a-verses with dissimilar dips. The addition of a third [metrically] stressed syllable to the a-verse only serves to make that tendency the more evident.' Hanna, 'Defining', p. 45, writes of differentiation of dip-lengths as a criterion for identifying Middle English alliterative poetry.

x x / x x / xx

In his **g**lowande **g**lorye and **g**loumbes ful lyttel

'In his shining glory and frowns very little'

P.94

x x / x x / x x

þat þe **d**aunger of **d**ry3tyn so **d**erfly ascaped

'Who the dominion of God so boldly evaded'

P.110

x x / x x / x x

Hat3 þou, **g**ome, no **g**ouernour ne **g**od on to calle

'Have you, man, no Protector nor God to call upon'

P.199

x x / x x / x x

For when þ'**a**cces of **a**nguych wat3 **h**id in my sawle

'For when the outburst of anguish was concealed in my soul'

P.325

x x / x x / x x

Nylt þou **n**euer to **N**uniue bi **n**o kynne3 waye3

'Will you never [go] to Ninive by roads of any kind'

P.346

x x / x x / x x

Þat þat penaunce plesed him þat playneȝ on her wronge

'That that penance would please him who complains of their wrongdoing'

P.376

There are two ways to interpret these apparent exceptions to proscription against three sequential dips of equivalent length. First, one could simply stand by the Limit on Sequential Equivalent Feet and settle for a proscription throughout the a-verse of three straight iambs, three straight anapests, and three straight quadruplet feet (xxx/xxx/xxx/). The scarcity in standard a-verses of x/x/x, xx/xx/xx, and xxx/xxx/xxx (i.e., without the final beat), though, seems to present an opportunity for adding to the list of forms of metrical differentiation.[193]

It may prove valuable at some point to have shown that not just three straight iambs (x/x/x/), anapests (xx/xx/xx/), or quadruplets (xxx/xxx/xxx/) are absent from the corpus, but that x/x/x, xx/xx/xx, and xxx/xxx/xxx are absent too. Upon scrutiny, none of the six verses listed above stands as a clear exception to the absence of xx/xx/xx. All six apparent exceptions actually provide opportunities to avoid repeating two-syllable dips. Meter certainly could motivate such adjustments. Contraction of *-ye* into a diphthong (called

[193] Using the terms *iamb*, *anapest*, and *foot* unfortunately risks implying that in poems like *Cleanness* and *Patience* metrically unstressed syllables should be thought of as grouped with following beats (i.e., ...x/), rather than with preceding beats (/x...). The use of the terms here is not meant to suggest such a view of Middle English alliterative verse. As the tallies of diverse verse segments like /xxx, /x/, and xxx/ in Chapter Three suggest, the dissertation leaves open the question of the proper metrical grouping of syllables in the verse. Since *iamb*, *anapest*, and *foot* are used in the present chapter only to articulate exactly what Middle English alliterative meter rejects, the risk of misappropriating these terms and the notions inextricably linked to them is minimal.

'synaeresis' by Paul Fussell) or consonantizing of the *-y-* (a different phenomenon that Chatman also calls 'synaeresis') would salvage P.94a:[194]

x x / x x / x

In his **g**lowande **g**lorye and **g**loumbes ful lyttel

P.94

P.110a and P.325a both admit of two normalizing adjustments. First, there is the possibility of a shift of metrical stress to the second syllable of *dryȝtyn* and to the second syllable of *anguych*. Bernhard Ten Brink's findings on Chaucer suggest that *dryȝtyn* and *anguych* also undergo apocope and lose the final weak *-e* indicated by dative case: 'After a syllable which, though unaccented, is capable of stress, weak *e* must become mute.'[195] These adjustments reveal metrical verses:

x x / x x x /

þat þe **d**aunger of **d**ryȝtyn so **d**erfly ascaped

P.110

x x / x x x /

For when þ'**a**cces of **a**nguych watȝ **h**id in my sawle

P.325

[194] See Chatman, 'Comparing', 1960, p. 162, and Paul Fussell, *Poetic Meter and Poetic Form*, rev. edn (New York: Random House, 1979), p. 26.
[195] ten Brink, *Chaucers*, p. 170.

Treating *neuer* as *ne'er* (through syncope of the *-u-*) would eliminate the repetition of two-syllable dips in P.346a:

x x / x / x x

Nylt þou **n**euer to **N**uniue bi **n**o kynneȝ wayeȝ?

P.346

While conventional metrical devices salvage the four verses above, P.376a and P.199a remain exceptions. Such poetic devices—synaeresis, shift of metrical stress, and syncope—are the very mechanisms by which Chaucer *produces* even alternation; it is, therefore, hardly a reach to invoke such mechanisms to account for the few exceptional verses in the corpus.

Gordon Braden suggests an interpretation of what has been called here the Limit on Sequential Equivalent Feet. He speculates that the poet avoided repeated two-syllable dips in order to escape the 'doggerel qualities of a regular anapaestic rhythm'.[196] Since |xx/xx| actually occurs hundreds of times, we might rephrase, 'the poet avoided three sequential two-syllable dips'. The point is that in two thousand verses, of which 160 have three beats and 1840 have two beats, there are hypothetically 2160 opportunities for three sequential dips to be of equal length; yet the number of such sequences approaches zero. It is in this way that the poet avoided doggerel repetition.

The connection between the Limit on Sequential Equivalent Feet and the Clashing Asymmetry Principle goes beyond a shared inclination toward variation.[197] Like the Limit

[196] See Braden, personal communication, in Duggan, 'Shape', p. 582 n. 45.
[197] Schematic representations of the principles may help to demonstrate their affinity with each other: Where 'N' represents a dip of a particular length and an asterisk indicates the

on Sequential Iambs, the Clashing Asymmetry Principle (i.e., the intolerance of x//x, xx//xx, and xxx//xxx) may be entailed by the Limit on Sequential Equivalent Feet or some slightly reworded version of it. It may be that the reason that clashing metrical stresses flanked by dips of equal length do not occur is that a pause between the clashing metrical stresses could make the space between the clashing metrical stresses *seem* equivalent to the dips that flank the clashing metrical stresses. The theorized zero-dip between clashing metrical stresses is a wild-card. Rather than taking on a time property that corresponds directly to the number of metrically unstressed syllables, as one-syllable, two-syllable, and three-syllable dips do, the zero-dip's potential to correspond to a pause makes it dangerously malleable to any length. Clashing symmetry therefore could pose an effective threat to the Limit on Sequential Equivalent Feet. The Clashing Asymmetry Principle is thus nearly a corollary of the Limit on Sequential Equivalent Feet, which could be reformulated:

> Limit on Sequential Equivalent Feet: Whether iambs, anapests, or quadruplets, metrically equivalent feet cannot occur sequentially more than twice in the a-verse. In the b-verse, metrically equivalent feet cannot occur sequentially at all. The potential for the space between clashing metrical stresses to seem equivalent to nearby dips means that the dips flanking the clashing metrical stresses must be different from each other in length.

Instead of viewing the corpus' rhythmic profile broadly, this chapter focused on sequences of particular types of dips. It began by observing that the progression of

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absence of a pattern, the Clashing Asymmetry Principle is *|N//N| and the Limit on Sequential Equivalent Feet is *|N/N/N|.

scholarship in Middle English alliterative metrics is analogous to the progress made in twentieth-century scholarship on Old English alliterative metrics. Just as Old English scholars first catalogued patterns, second identified general principles, and then devised specific, theoretically viable metrical rules, so the scholarship in Middle English alliterative verse continues on a path toward increasingly precise and plausible statements of meter. The Clashing Asymmetry Principle and the Limit on Sequential Iambs turn out to be corollaries of the broader tendency toward metrical differentiation known as the Limit on Sequential Equivalent Feet. Chapter Five pursues an even narrower focus by gauging the legitimacy of individual types of dips. Having delineated the *Gawain*-poet's careful eschewal of prevailing fourteenth-century metrical practices, the study corrects any impression that his accomplishment was only a 'revolt'. By relying on standard metrical devices like promotion and effecting genuine metrical tension, he secures for Middle English alliterative verse a position in the English poetic canon amongst the other artfully crafted, metrically rich traditions.

Chapter Five: Metrical Promotion, Linguistic Promotion, and False Extra-Long Dips

This chapter examines the role of multiple forms of promotion in Middle English alliterative verse. Metrical promotion is the treatment of a normally linguistically unaccented syllable as a metrically stressed syllable. The argument uses two important observations to demonstrate the operation of this kind of promotion in contexts where some metrists insist it does not occur. The first observation is that metrists already readily promote certain syllables in a variety of contexts without necessarily realizing that they are promoting words. This observation makes the promotions of other syllables that actually have similar contexts much more intuitive. The second observation is that the legitimacy of three-beat verses, which was established in Chapter Three, opens up the possibility for new readings of verses previously believed to be standard (two-beat) a-verses. The study's Conclusion (see below) will build on the present chapter's examination of a variety of types of promotion by discussing the role of metrical tension in Middle English alliterative verse. Not just promotion, but demotion and a variety of other poetic devices and phenomena combine in Middle English alliterative poetry to form the fabric of expectations that make tension possible.

In making the case for promotion in Middle English alliterative verse, this chapter lays the groundwork for refuting metrists' denial of the presence of tension, or 'interplay', in this poetry. Wimsatt and Beardsley summarize the traditional account when they write:

> One of the disadvantages of the old strong-stress meter is doubtless its limited capacity for interplay. The stress pattern of the meter is so nearly the

> same as the stress pattern of the syntax and logic that there is nothing much for the meter to interplay with.[198]

What is at stake in the present discussion of promotion (and, for that matter, in discussions of demotion, crowded a-verses, and meticulous avoidance of Chaucerian even alternation) is 'the possibility of precise interplay' of meter with normal speech.[199] If the evidence supports metrical promotion, then ME alliterative verse's growing list of *bona fides* must also include traditional tension.

Establishing the legitimacy of verses with more than two beats has made it possible to account for the apparent presence of extra-long dips (i.e., dips of more than three syllables). Showing that crowded verses can have more than two beats changes the entire portrait of Middle English alliterative verse. Before this demonstration, the metrist could not easily give crowded a-verses more than two beats without lengthy argumentation; salvaging standard a-verses with unusually long dips through promotion was not an option. Now that it is clear that crowded a-verses get third beats, one need not limit three-beat scansions to the 160 undisputed crowded a-verses used to compare the two-beat theory with the Rhythmic Consistency Theory. Now, one need not hold back from treating all alliterating Tier II words as metrically stressed by default; moreover, one quarter of all a-verses clearly have more than two beats. Under these conditions, salvaging unusual standard a-verses is much easier: The metrical patterns of the three-beat crowded a-verses set a precedent for the types of scansions that can salvage the unusual standard a-verses.

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[198] Wimsatt and Beardsley, 'Concept', p. 597, col. 1.
[199] Wimsatt and Beardsley, 'Concept', p. 597, cols 1 and 2.

In order to show that promotion of a syllable to produce a three-beat a-verse is not just acceptable, but often essential, this section of the study makes the case that extra-long dips are illegitimate in Middle English alliterative verse, that any scansion that has an extra-long dip is incomplete. After demonstrating that extra-long dips would contradict principles of poetics and linguistics, the chapter shows how promotion both eliminates the problems and complies with other basic theoretical principles. The section on promotion concludes with an explanation of how promotion and this new outlook on its operation can help to explain other kinds of verses that are problematic in different ways.

Several precedents and principles challenge the legitimacy of strings of metrically unstressed syllables that stretch for longer than three syllables in Middle English alliterative verses. First, while feet of both two and three syllables have found success in English poetry, feet of more than three syllables have had no such success. Any English foot meter that seems analyzable as a sequence of xxx/ patterns, for example, slides inevitably, in one way or another, back into a canonical meter. In one scenario, patterns like xxx/xxx/ slip into a dipodic pattern with three levels of metrical stress, namely weak metrical stress, secondary metrical stress, and primary metrical stress: x\x/x\x/. In another scenario, xxx/xxx/ falls all the way back to the iambic pattern x/x/x/x/. Duple and triple meters thrive in English, but 'quadruple' meters owe any success that they do find to affinities with the more fundamental duple meters. Given this situation, it is hard to imagine that extra-long dips in Middle English alliterative verse, with fully four consecutive metrically unstressed syllables, could withstand pressure to collapse similarly into multiple, shorter segments.

The Rhythmic Consistency Principle proposed in Chapter Three also casts doubt on extra-long dips. The problem with such long dips is akin to the problem with the two-beat theory generally. The overabundance of metrically unstressed syllables would occur almost exclusively in the a-verse since the b-verse does not have extra-long dips. This situation would constitute a gross imbalance between the two half-lines. It would be an imbalance, moreover, that goes well beyond the legitimate, rigorous metrical differentiation of the two half-lines described in Chapter One. It is one thing to say that the a-verse cannot infringe on the b-verse meter, and it would be another thing entirely to say that the a-verse can have extra-long dips but the b-verse cannot. There is no rhythmic consistency in allowing patterns like x/xxxx/x in a-verses like the following one when such long dips and such high concentrations of metrically unstressed syllables are rare in the b-verse:

*x / x x x x / x

And **r**ekken vp alle þe **r**esoun3 þat ho by **r**i3t aske3

'And count up all the narratives that she requires by right'

C.2

High concentrations of metrically unstressed syllables conflict with the rhythm of the rest of the corpus.

In addition to precedents from other English poetic traditions and principles of Middle English alliterative verse, extra-long dips contradict principles of English phonology. The connections between this poetry and rules of linguistic accentuation get insufficient attention as it is; but among the most neglected topics in metrics is the role of rate of speech in linguistic accentuation and how it might influence meter. Metrists who do

invoke principles of tempo often do so erroneously. Wimsatt and Beardsley, for example, write that what they consider the 'strong-stress' meter of the first four parts of *The Waste Land* encourages the reader to read Part V 'at a fast walk as a strong-stress meter'.[200] Wimsatt and Beardsley's designation of tempo stacks the deck in favor of a strong-stress reading. A fast tempo creates the optimal environment for the syllable suppression that Wimsatt and Beardsley imply. Rampant demotion, in turn, can lead to the impression that only beats are counted. This syllable suppression would not occur at a slower, more reasonable tempo, though. In applying concepts of English phonology to metrics, one must keep in mind the role of tempo.

Here we come to a basic problem in the definition of rhythm, the extent to which changes of tempo change the rhythm. The distribution of linguistic accent in normal spoken English depends partly on a speaker's rate of speech. As Fox explains, the compound *elevator-operator* can have one to four accented syllables, depending on whether one pronounces it quickly (as in *élevator-operator's cár*) or slowly (*élevátor-óperáton*).[201] One of the weaknesses of Mark Liberman and Alan Prince's influential metrical theory of phonology, in fact, is that it fails to acknowledge the dissipation of prominence relations as utterances grow longer (or, more precisely, as utterances become more syntactically complex).[202] Metrists must be careful when invoking the complex rules of linguistic accentuation to explain poetic rhythms.

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[200] Wimsatt and Beardsley, 'Concept', p. 598.
[201] Fox, *Prosodic*, p. 145.
[202] Mark Yoffe Liberman and Alan Prince, 'On Stress and Linguistic Rhythm', *Linguistic Inquiry,* 8 (1977), pp. 249-336. 'Stress' in the article's title refers to what the present study

Angus McIntosh, in fact, alludes to the connection between tempo and linguistic accent. This connection actually is one reason why even in Middle English alliterative verse, where metrical stress tracks linguistic accent so closely, we cannot speak of perfect correspondence between metrical stress and linguistic accent. In opting for the term 'prominence' over terms connected to linguistic accent, McIntosh refers to 'the effect that different tempos may have on the rhythmic structure of a passage as, for example, when one changes from a quite fast to a quite slow delivery'.[203] One should not allow the potential variability of linguistic accent within one and the same phrase in normal speech to contaminate the more straightforward process of identifying metrical stress in poetry.

The only conceivable way to legitimize four-syllable dips in Middle English alliterative verse would be to privilege the environment in which four linguistically unaccented syllables could occur consecutively, but such an approach would lean too heavily on the vast mutability of normal speech. An increase in tempo would make the number of necessary linguistic accents decrease, but there is no evidence that poems like *Patience* call for such an exceptionally fast tempo; indeed, poetry's role as a showcase of the spoken word makes a normal (or even slower) rate of recitation far more plausible. Imagine the irony of rushing through a poem that preaches:

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calls linguistic accent. For more commentary on Liberman and Prince, see Fox, *Prosodic*, pp. 164, 175.

[203] In favoring the term 'prominence', McIntosh, 'Early', p. 30, avoids the terms 'stress' and 'stressed', which for him denote what the present study refers to as 'linguistic accent' and 'linguistically accented'.

For he þat is to **r**akel to **r**enden his cloþe3

Mot efte **s**itte with more vn**s**ounde to **s**ewe hem to-geder

'For he who is too hasty to rip his clothes

Must afterwards sit in more distress to sew them together.'

P.526-7

Like Wimsatt and Beardsley, Inoue and Stokes present a theory that implies a fast rate of speech, which hypothetically could help legitimize extra-long dips, but which is implausible. Consider P.186a:

On-**h**elde by þe **h**urrok, for þe **h**euen wrache,

/ x x x x / x /x x

Slypped vpon a **s**loumbe-**s**elepe, and **s**loberande he routes.

'Huddled by the bilge because of the heaven's vengeance,

Fallen into a deep sleep and slobbering he snores'

P.185-6

Inoue and Stokes' 'Spacing Rule' calls for subordination of the linguistic accent on *selepe*. Even though, admittedly, this word is accentually the weakest of the three candidates for ictus, there is no good reason for demotion here. A fast tempo is the only conceivable basis for a demotion.[204] Inasmuch as poetry is not known for rushed recitation, such a tempo is

[204] Application of the Compound Stress Rule to *sloumbe-selepe* and then the Nuclear Stress Rule to the entire verse would produce a stress hierarchy with *selepe* below *sloumbe* and *slypped*. For this verse, the Spacing Rule does at least propose subordination of what generative phonology would show to be the weakest of the three candidates for ictus. (The word 'Stress' in the names CSR and NSR refer to what the present study calls linguistic accent.)

difficult to imagine; moreover, the verse's semantic content, a reference to dozing off, would encourage the slower reading that would produce three beats.

Other principles of English linguistics call into question the legitimacy of extra-long dips. While the strictest observance of the grammatical hierarchy (assigning metrical stress solely on the basis of parts of speech) sometimes seems to call for four-syllable dips, there is an opposite pressure that works to eliminate such long stretches of unaccented syllables. Phonologist Elizabeth Selkirk's 'Lapse Constraint' works to limit the lengths of strings of unaccented syllables to two syllables.[205] Selkirk writes, 'The rhythmic organization of speech abhors a lapse as much as it does a stress clash."[206] She presents the constraint as a principle of the English language; the present study proposes to use it to shed light on poetic meter. The four-syllable dips implied by two-beat theories of Middle English alliterative verse could result only from excessively rigid observance of the grammatical hierarchy at the expense of proper acknowledgment of the tendency in English for at least one out of every three syllables to exhibit prominence over its neighbors.[207]

The 'abhorrence' in MdnE of long stretches of syllables with no prominence does not on its own establish the illegitimacy of four-syllable dips in Middle English alliterative verse. First of all, one cannot assume that Middle English phonological properties align

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[205] Elizabeth O. Selkirk, *Phonology and Syntax: The Relation between Sound and Structure*, Current Studies in Linguistics, 10 (Cambridge, Massachusetts, and London, England: MIT Press, 1984), p. 49, discusses the 'Lapse Constraint'.
[206] Selkirk, *Phonology*, p. 49. By 'stress clash', Selkirk means what the present study would refer to as 'clash of linguistically accented syllables'.
[207] In Chapter Four, the term 'sequential' was used to refer to two metrical dips separated by exactly one beat, and the term 'neighboring' was avoided for fear that it would suggest that no beat intervened. In the present discussion, 'neighbor' denotes true juxtaposition of metrically unstressed syllables, with nothing intervening.

with MdnE properties in all cases. Second, even if the lapse constraint or some version of it applied in Middle English, evidence of patterns of linguistic prominence do not necessarily translate to evidence of patterns of metrical prominence. Even if an utterance of the verse P.185a ***S****lypped vpon a* ***s****loumbe-****s****elepe* tends to break up the two long stretches of syllables *-ed vpon a* and *-be selepe* with some prominence on *-pon* and *se-*, one still must show that these linguistic phenomena translate to additional metrical stresses. Consider how readers of poetry in triple meter can treat secondary sentence accents.

> And the sheen of their spears was like stars on the sea,
>
> x x / x x / x x / xx /
>
> When the blue wave rolls nightly on deep Galilee.
>
> Byron, 'The Destruction of Sennacherib'.3-4 (1815)[208]

In this verse from Lord Byron, the noun *wave* and the verb *rolls* may be linguistically accented in performance, but they are metrically unstressed offbeats. As the scansion indicates, in spite of any linguistic prominence, they do not get beats. One who supports four-syllable dips in Middle English alliterative verse might challenge the relevance of the Lapse Constraint by pointing out how readily linguistically accented syllables can become metrically unstressed syllables. Such a reader might suggest that treating the marginal linguistic prominence motivated by the long string of unaccented syllables as metrically stressed would be like treating *wave* and *rolls* above as metrically stressed. The main difference, though, is that whereas a strict template of anapests looms large over Byron's

[208] George Gordon Byron, Baron, *Byron's Childe Harold, Cantos III and IV, The Prisoner of Chillon, and Other Poems*, ed. by Hardin Craig, English Readings for Schools (New York: H. Holt, 1913), p. 149.

poem, there is no such template coercing accents out of prominence in the Middle English alliterative a-verse. Coercion in fact exerts pressure in nearly the opposite direction: The precedent of eschewing four-syllable dips in English poetry, the rhythmical pattern set by b-verses that lack four-syllable dips, and the heightened link in Middle English alliterative verse between linguistic accentuation and metrical stress all exert pressure toward compliance with the Lapse Constraint.

It is important to take a step back from this analysis to consider terminology. Properly speaking, the term 'promotion' has been used in this study to indicate the phenomenon in which linguistically unaccented words become prominent in poetry. A preposition in a verse from Chaucer that rises to a level of metrical stress technically transgresses linguistic rules of accentuation to comply with poetic rules of metrical stress. Relying on principles of linguistic accentuation, though, to discredit four-syllable dips implies the operation of a different kind of promotion. In a sense, it is a linguistic, rather than strictly metrical promotion. In countless Chaucerian promotions, the language calls for a linguistically unaccented syllable and the template coerces the syllable into metrical stress (i.e., the syllable gets a beat). In Middle English alliterative verse, however, the adjustments of prominence under discussion occur within the language itself. Promotion within the poetry is not necessary because the syllables in question would attain prominence even in normal speech. Just as it is not the poetry that requires a [d] to be pronounced /d/, it is not the poetry that requires one of four consecutive syllables to be prominent. The onus of proving an adjustment in prominence, in fact, is on the reader who wants to treat the linguistically accented syllables as metrically unstressed. Inevitably, in

the absence of a template in the a-verse, a reader argues only unconvincingly for a metrical demotion. Opponents of four-syllable dips, in contrast, have on their side the indisputable principle that the Middle English alliterative beat (i.e., metrical stress) closely tracks linguistic accentuation.

The line of reasoning that invokes Selkirk's lapse constraint to eliminate four-syllable dips runs up against a difficult question. If the lapse constraint keeps four-syllable dips from occurring in poems like *Cleanness* and *Patience*, why would it not also keep three-syllable dips from occurring? The 'abhorrence', after all, is to stretches of more than two unaccented syllables. Do the thousands of apparent three-syllable dips in Middle English alliterative verse in fact break into two dips separated by an additional beat? Answering yes would require an entire retelling of the b-verse meter since eliminating three-syllable dips would create third beats in b-verses with patterns like xxx//x, xxx/x/x, /xxx/x, and x/xxx/x; of course, one could say that template-motivated demotion would exert a greater pressure toward subordination of linguistically accented syllables and thereby keep the b-verse patterns familiar. Adjusting three-syllable dips in the a-verse, though, would turn out to be more problematic: One would have to consider having many more beats than two-beat theorists and three-beat theorists alike have considered plausible there; moreover, patterns like xxx/xxx/ would in many cases turn into long stretches of the proscribed evenly alternating offbeats and beats.

According to the Lapse Constraint, the cut-off for stretches of unaccented syllables in MdnE is two, so three-syllable dips would seem to have the types of prominences that are being proposed for four-syllable dips. One possible solution to this problem is a lapse

constraint specific to the Middle English phase of the history of English. In that scenario, instead of two consecutive unaccented syllables, Middle English could tolerate up to three consecutive unaccented syllables. It is more likely, though, that the Middle English Lapse Constraint was similar to the MdnE Lapse Constraint, and that something else explains its strong impact on four-syllable dips and its minimal impact on three-syllable dips. As the discussion on tension in the next chapter will explain, it is likely that the pressure of the Lapse Constraint increases as dip-length increases. Four-syllable dips constitute such an offense that compromises regarding the grammatical hierarchy must be made; three-syllable dips, on the other hand, offend only moderately, so strict observance of the grammatical hierarchy can persist. Overall, the existence of the Lapse Constraint favors treating apparent four-syllable dips as two shorter dips separated by an additional beat.

Since there is little precedent in English poetry generally, in the Middle English alliterative b-verse, or in English phonology for four-syllable dips, extra-long dips lack legitimacy. Linguistic promotion and corresponding assignment of metrical stress provide a remedy. With an eye toward further demonstrating the appropriateness of linguistic promotion, this section examines the mechanics of promotion in other parts of the long line and asks whether apparent extra-long dips resemble the other environments where metrists readily invoke promotion.

Metrists already invoke metrical promotion frequently in b-verse scansions. In many cases, truly linguistically unaccented syllables occur where the b-verse meter demands a beat. In the following lines, few metrists would dispute the scansions at the ends of the b-verses:

x / x x / x

For þay schal **c**omfort en**c**roche in **k**ythes ful mony

'For they shall obtain solace in very many lands'

P.18

/ x x / x

And þenne dame **P**es and **P**acyence **p**ut in þer-after

'And then Dame Peace and [Dame] Patience set in thereafter'

P.33

x / x x / x

He **c**rouke3 for **c**omfort when **c**arayne he fynde3

'He croaks with comfort when he finds carrion'

C.459

The first beats in each of these b-verses fall quite naturally on *kythes*, *put*, and *carayne*, because these words both alliterate and rank high in the grammatical hierarchy. The pronominal adjective *mony*, the adverb *þer-after*, and the full verb *fynde3*, though, are not such obvious candidates for metrical stress since they do not alliterate and since they are not at the top of the grammatical hierarchy. Something apart from the grammatical hierarchy is at play in the scansion of the second beats of these three b-verses. The meter itself certainly plays a role: The b-verse must end with exactly one beat followed by exactly one metrically unstressed syllable. Another feature of the environment may play a role too, though. Without promotion, the b-verses would end with extra-long dips. This environment, then, is one in which metrists avoid extra-long dips through promotion. The

metrical promotion is at least consistent with, if not overshadowed by, the language's tendency to avoid long stretches of linguistically unaccented syllables.

There are many b-verses in which promotion of normally metrically unstressed syllables eliminates extra-long dips:

Non-alliterating Tier II Word (Adverb):[209]

x / x x x / x

And ay **g**lydande wyth his **G**od his **g**race wat3 þe <u>mo</u>re

'And, always living with his God his grace was the greater'

C.296

/ x x x / x

Beste3, as I bedene haue **b**osk þerinne <u>al</u>s

'beasts as I have bidden bring therein also'

C.351

Non-alliterating Tier II Word (Full Verb):

x / x x / x

And þus of lenþe and of large þat **l**ome þou <u>ma</u>ke

'And thus in length and in width you must make that vessel'

C.314

[209] This chapter relies on Chapter One's terms for the levels of the grammatical hierarchy. Tier I words (nouns, adjectives, infinitives, and participles) get metrical stress by default. Alliterating Tier II words (verbs, adverbs, pronominal adjectives, words in *-self*) also get metrical stress by default. Non-alliterating Tier II words and alliterating Tier III words (function words like prepositions and auxiliaries) usually are metrically unstressed but can be promoted for metrical purposes. Non-alliterating Tier III words are metrically unstressed by default.

x / x x x / x

Is **f**allen **f**orþwyth my **f**ace and **f**orþer hit I þenk

'Has come before my sight and I intend to speed it'

C.304

Non-alliterating Tier II Word (Word Ending in *-self*):

x / x x / x

When he **k**new vche **c**ontre **c**oruppte in hitseluen

'When he recognized every region corrupt in itself'

C.281

/ x x / x

And als in **r**esoune3 of **r**y3t **r**ed hit myseluen

'And also declared it myself with statements of truth'

C.194

Alliterating Tier III Word (Pronoun):

/ x x x / x

I com wyth **þ**ose ty**þ**ynges **þ**ay ta me bylyue

'[If] I arrive with those tidings they would seize me quickly'

P.78

Alliterating Tier III Word (Auxiliary):

x x x / x / x

Þat euer I **m**ade hem **m**yself bot if I <u>may</u> herafter

'That I ever made them myself. However, that I may [look]

to the future' C.291

x / x x / x

In **d**ry3 **d**red and **d**aunger þat <u>d</u>urst do non oþer

'With enduring awe and submission he who dared do nothing else'

C.342

The b-verse template is so strong that even words usually barred from metrical stress by the grammatical hierarchy sometimes get beats:

Non-alliterating Tier III Word (Auxiliary):

x / x x / x

Alle e**xc**used hem by þe **sk**yly he **s**cape by <u>mo</u>3t

'All excused themselves with the reason they could escape by'

C.62

/ x x / x

So with **m**arschal at her **m**ete **m**ensked þay <u>we</u>re

'Thus they were treated courteously at their meal by [the] marshal.'

C.118

Non-alliterating Tier III Word (Pronoun):

x / x x / x

Þus þay **d**roȝ hem a**d**reȝ with **d**aunger v<u>cho</u>ne

'Thus they drew themselves away with opposition, each one'

C.71

/ x x / x

Be þay **f**ers, be þay **f**eble **f**orlote<u>ȝ</u> <u>no</u>ne

'Be they strong, be they weak overlook none'

C.101

Non-alliterating Tier III Word (Preposition):

x / xx / x

And for**s**ette<u>ȝ</u> on vche a **s**yde þe **c**ete a<u>boute</u>

'And stop, on every side around the city'

C.78

Non-alliterating Tier III Word (Primary Verb):

x / x x x / x

And **b**rynge<u>ȝ</u> hem **b**lyþly to **b**or<u>ȝ</u>e as **b**aroune<u>ȝ</u> þay <u>we</u>re

'And bring them merrily to [this] dwelling as if they were barons'

C.82

Metrists also sometimes treat minor words in would-be extra-long dips as metrically stressed even beyond the reach of the b-verse template. Many standard a-verses depend on such a mechanism for the requisite second beat:

Non-alliterating Tier II Word (Adverb):

x x x / x x / x

Bot neuer 3et in no boke breued I herde

'But never yet from any book have I heard declared'

C.197

x x x / x x / x

Wich arn þenne þy wede3 þou wrappe3 þe inne

'What are, then, your clothes [that] you wrap yourself in'

C.169

x x / x x / x

Durst nowhere for ro3 arest at þe bothem

'Dared nowhere, because of [the] turbulence remain at the bottom'

P.144

Metrists readily assign metrical stress to minor words to produce metrical b-verses and to produce metrical standard (two-beat) a-verses. Promotion to avoid extra-long dips in other kinds of a-verses, therefore, is at least consistent with the reading of Middle English alliterative verse by modern authorities. Where an a-verse has two beats by default but would have an extra-long dip, a third beat comes naturally. There are 172 b-verses that have four-syllable dips before any promotion, but the meter causes all of these dips to be eliminated through promotion. In contrast, before any promotion, there are only 44 such dips in a-verses that would become crowded with a promotion. The gross rhythmic

disruption that these 44 dips would cause ought to be enough to convince one that the proposed metrical reckoning is in order.

Even more compelling, though, is the content of these apparent extra-long dips in the a-verses that already have two beats. There is an extraordinarily high frequency of occurrence of metrically stressable and linguistically accentable words in the dips in question. Almost every dip has a word that metrists have long thought nothing of promoting in verses like the b-verses and standard a-verses cited above. There almost always seems to be a non-alliterating Tier II word or an alliterating Tier III word available for promotion; moreover, there is rarely a call to promote a non-alliterating Tier III word in the a-verses in question, even though such promotions frequently prove necessary in the b-verse (as in the promotion of the non-alliterating pronoun *vchone* in C.71b and the non-alliterating preposition *aboute* in C.78b above). In other words, the a-verse promotions proposed are even more firmly grounded in the primacy of the grammatical hierarchy than promotions already readily accepted in b-verses and standard a-verses. The precedents set in b-verses and in standard a-verses, combined with the demonstrated legitimacy of three-beat a-verses, make the addition of a beat a viable solution resolving the problem of the a-verse's apparent extra-long dips, even when the result is a crowded a-verse:

Non-alliterating Tier II Word (Adverb):

/ x / x x / x

Wyrk **w**one3 þer<u>inn</u>e for **w**ylde and for tame

'Design dwellings therein for wild creatures and for tame'

C.311

/ / x x x / x

Lys **l**oltrande þer-<u>in</u>ne **l**okande to toune

'looking toward [the] city, [he] stays lounging therein'

P.458

x / x x / x x / x

Bot **l**enge where-<u>so-e</u>uer hir **l**yst **l**yke oþer greme

'But may linger wheresoever she wishes to be liked or to be disliked'

P.42

Non-alliterating Tier II Word (Pronominal Adjective):

x / x x / x / x

He **c**alde on þat <u>ilk</u> **c**rafte he **c**arf with his hondes

'He called on that same power he created with his hands'

P.131

x / x x x / / x

And **o**ffer þe for <u>my</u> **h**ele a ful **h**ol gyfte

'And offer to you for my well-being a very complete gift'

P.335

Alliterating Tier III Word (Preposition):

x / x x / x / x x

Me **m**yneȝ on one a<u>m</u>ong<u>g</u>e oþer as **M**aþew recordeȝ

'[This] reminds me of one among others such as Matthew mentions'

C.25

All of these linguistic promotions produce common three-beat a-verse patterns. C.311a's /x/xx/x pattern, for example, occurs in C.302a and C.399a:

/ x / xx / x

Wylde **w**rakful **w**orde3 in his **w**ylle greued

'Wild, angry words according to his mood, seethed'

C.302

/ x / x x / x

Frende3 **f**ellen in **f**ere and **f**aþmed togeder

'Friends joined in companionship and clung together'

C.399

P.42a's x/xx/xx/x occurs in:

x / x x / x x / x

Þe **v**erray **v**engaunce of God schal **v**oyde þis place

'The sure vengeance of God shall void this place'

P.370

P.131a's x/xx/x/x occurs in:

x / x x / x / x

Þe **d**errest at þe hy3e **d**ese þat **d**ubbed wer fayrest

'The noblest, who were arrayed most adequately, on the high dais'

C.115

x / x x / x / x

A **n**os on þe **n**orþ syde and **n**owhere non elle3

'With an opening on the north side and nowhere else'

P.451

P.458a's //xxx/x occurs frequently elsewhere, though only after a kind of metrical promotion to be discussed later in this chapter:

/ / x x x / x[210]

þen **h**urled on a **h**epe þe **h**elme and þe sterne

'Then fell in a heap the tiller and the rudder'

P.149

The long list of precedents for the three-beat a-verse patterns proposed supports the legitimacy of breaking up the metrically and linguistically dubious extra-long dips with beats.

The three-beat a-verse patterns proposed here, moreover, are quite consistent with other principles of the long line meter. Such patterns never challenge the Limit on Sequential Iambs established in Chapter Four. Consider the four possible results of metrically stressing one of the metrically unstressed syllables in the pattern /xxxx/:

...//xxx/...

.../x/xx/...

.../xx/x/...

.../xxx//...

[210] The *h-* of *hurled* elides the historical final *-e* of *þen* 'then' (< OE *þanne*).

All of these patterns avoid the even alternation of beats and offbeats. These exact four patterns occur often. In the following verses, promotions of non-alliterating primary verb *gete*, non-alliterating adverbs *in* and *þider*, and non-alliterating pronominal adjective *his* produce verses that contain, respectively, //xxx/, /x/xx/, /xx/x/, and /xxx//:

/ /x x x /

Er ge**t**e ȝe no **h**appe I **h**ope forsoþe

'Or you will have no luck I truly believe'

P.212

/ x / x x / x

Relande in by a **r**op a **r**ode þat hym þoȝt

'Rolling in by a gut which seemed to him a rood's length'

P.270

x /x x / x / x

Now **s**weȝe me þider **s**wyftly and **s**ay me þis arende

'Now hasten there for me swiftly and speak this message for me'

P.72

x / x x x / / x[211]

Bot **I**onas in-to his **j**uis **j**ugge bylyue

'Except Jonas to his doom to sentence quickly'

P.224

[211] Note that ten Brink's environments for elision, as discussed in the present study's Chapter One, do not include 'unaccented *-o* before *h-*'.

There are a few types of promotion in Middle English alliterative verse, all of which are different from Chaucer's strict template-motivated promotion. There is promotion motivated by the b-verse's template, a template less strict than Chaucer's, but nevertheless coercive. There is a linguistic promotion in the a-verse that is responsible for the second necessary beat of a standard a-verse. This type of promotion is similar to most of the b-verse promotions in that it eliminates extra-long dips. A third kind of a-verse promotion also eliminates extra-long dips, but is distinctive in that it produces a third beat.

In light of the support for metrical promotion in the template-governed b-verse and linguistic promotion in a variety of contexts in the a-verse's less coercive template-governed meter, one might begin to wonder whether and how promotion might solve other problems in the long line. All of these types of promotion suggest a way to handle the occasional apparent standard a-verse that seems to end with an awkward three-syllable dip. Thirty-eight verses seem, after consideration of the grammatical hierarchy, to end in three-syllable dips. They fall into four categories. First, in one third of these verses, the final beat and final three-syllable dip all come from the same word, as in C.10a *reuerence* and P.71a *vilanye*:

* / x x / x x x

/ x x / x x

Reken with **r**euerence þay **r**ychen his auter

'Promptly, with reverence they approach his altar'

C.10

* x / x x x / x xx

x / x x x / x x

Bot **v**enge me on her **v**ilany<u>e</u> and **v**enym bilyue

'But must avenge myself on their villainy and venom quickly'

P.71

As with C.10a *reuerence* and P.71a *vilanye*, most of these verse-final dips can be reduced in length through syncope, synaeresis, or some other standard metrical process. In any case, the rhythmic effect of a verse-final dip of three syllables is probably least jarring when it comes from a single word.

Second, in around another third of the cases of awkward, verse-final dips of more than two syllables, standard metrical adjustments reduce the length of the dip. In this example, construing *ouerþwert* as a prepositional phrase with dative *-e* on *þwert* produces the four-syllable dip in which linguistic promotion becomes natural:

*x / x / x x x

x / x / x x / x

Of **f**yfty **f**ayre ouer<u>þwert</u> **f**orme þe brede

'form the width about fifty cubits right across'

C.316

In the following example, examination of the distribution of *þyse* in the corpus suggests that it may be only one syllable instead of two:

*x x x / x / x x x

x x x / x / x x

Oþer **a**ni **o**n of **a**lle <u>þyse</u> he schulde be **h**alden **v**tter

'Or any one of all these he would be thrown outside'

C.42

Third, another thirteen of the 38 a-verses that apparently end in awkward three-syllable dips nearly match the environment for extra-long dip described for the b-verse, the standard a-verse, and other a-verses above. There is a promotable word (non-alliterating Tier II word or alliterating Tier III word) in the dip, but the dip is only three syllables long. In this verse, for example, the non-alliterating Tier II word *hymself* may attract linguistic accent and therefore metrical stress:

* / / x x x x x / / x

/ / x x / x x / / x

Kryst **k**ydde hit hym<u>self</u> in a **c**arp one3

'Christ made it known himself in a speech once'

C.23

It may be that the phonological intolerance that makes four-syllable dips impossible also disfavors verse-final three-syllable dips. The coupling of such intolerance with the presence of a promotable word perhaps is enough to eliminate verse-final dips of more than two syllables. It is notable, though, that the following b-verse in these cases, including in C.23 above, usually begins with a metrically unstressed syllable, a syllable which may increase pressure toward promotion:

*x / x / x x x x / x x / x

x / x / x x / x / x x / x

Ano**þ**er **n**ayed al**so** and **n**urned **þ**is cawse

'Another refused also and gave this reason'

C.65

* / x x / x x x x / x x / x

/ x x / x x / x / x x / x

Sewed a **s**ekke **þ**er-a**bof** and **s**yked ful colde

'Sewed a sackcloth over it and sighed very grievously'

P.382

In some instances, the case for the ameliorating metrical stress is boosted not just by the verse-final position of the awkward dip, by the moderately high position of the word on the grammatical hierarchy, and by a metrically unstressed syllable at the beginning of the following b-verse, but also by a precedent in Old English poetry. Kuhn's Laws cover the earlier tradition of poetry but may have implications for Middle English alliterative poetry too.[212] Under these laws, some words that normally avoid prominence can become metrically stressed late in a verse. Transposition in a verse can cue the reader to such targeted prominence. As in P.382a above, the transposition sometimes comes in the form

[212] Hans Kuhn, 'Zur Wortstellung und -Betonung im Altgermanischen', *Beiträge zur Geschichte der Deutschen Sprache und Literatur,* 57 (1933), pp. 1-109. See Cable, *English*, pp. 20-23; Mary Eva Blockley and Thomas Monroe Cable, 'Kuhn's Laws, Old English Poetry, and the New Philology', in *Beowulf: Basic Readings*, ed. by Peter S. Baker (New York, NY: Garland, 1995), pp. 261-79; and Daniel Donoghue, *Style in Old English Poetry: The Test of the Auxiliary*, Yale Studies in English, 196 (New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 1987), for further discussion, especially of whether meter, syntax, or phonology drives the phenomenon.

of adverbs that seem to comprise a prepositional object followed by a postposed preposition. Again, a metrically unstressed opening to the following b-verse often supports the proposed metrical prominence:

* / x / x x x / x x / x

/ x / x x / x / x x / x

Summe swymmed þeron þat saue hemself trawed

'Some who hoped to save themselves swam in it.'

C.388

Sometimes the transposition comprises two separate words:

*x /x / x x x x x / / x

x /x / x x / x x / / x

As lyttel wonder hit watȝ ȝif he wo dreȝed

'So that little wonder it was if he suffered adversity'

P.256

* x / x x / x x x x x x / x / x

x / x x / x x / x x x / x / x

Þe fayrest bynde hym abof þat euer burne wyste

'The fairest vine above him that man could ever discover'

P.444

Kuhn's Laws may help to explain a fourth category of awkward verse-final dips. In this category, the verses seem to lack a promotable word or seem to lack a nearby metrically unstressed syllable in the opening of the following b-verse. In one case, the

environment for promotion (i.e., an extra-long dip if one considers the opening of the following b-verse) is there, but there is no word that regularly attracts promotion. As a non-alliterating Tier III word (preposition), C.86a *wyth* is a poor candidate for promotion, but its transposition may attract a beat:

* / x / x x x x x x / x / x

/ x / x x x / x x x / x / x

Bro3ten **b**achlere3 hem <u>wyth</u> þat þay by **b**onke3 metten

'Brought young men with them whom they met by the hill-sides'

C.86

In another case there is no usual environment for promotion even when one considers the beginning of the following b-verse. There is, however, a promotable word (i.e., a non-alliterating verb) that has been transposed:

* / x x x / x x x / x x x / x

/ x x x / x / x / x x x / x

Beste3, as I **b**edene <u>haue</u> **b**osk þerinne als

'beasts as I have bidden bring therein also'

C.351

Constituting a fifth category of verses with problematic verse-final dips is C.327a.

* x x / / x x x x / x x x / x[213]

Bot my **f**orwarde <u>with</u> þe I **f**esten on þis wyse

'But my covenant with you I seal in this manner'

C.327

It may be that the metrically unstressed syllable of the following b-verse and the influence of secondarily alliterating *wyse* call for this scansion:

x x / / x / x x / x x x / x[214]

Bot my **f**orwarde with þe <u>I</u> **f**esten on þis <u>w</u>yse

C.327

To this point, promotion has come in the last beat of template-governed b-verses (metrical promotion), on promotable words in extra-long dips (linguistic promotion), and on words in contexts that approximate extra-long dips (linguistic promotion). A quite different kind of promotion appears to operate in the a-verse. There are several a-verses that look too much like b-verses, even when one considers Yakovlev's observation of the distributions of vowel qualities (see the present study's Chapter One). These anomalous verses seem unmetrical. It is here, though, that three principles and phenomena converge: 1) the principle of metrical differentiation of the two half-lines; 2) the presence of clearly promotable words; and 3) the rhythmically ameliorating effect of three-beat a-verses as described in Chapter Three. Consider these examples:

[213] As Chapter Three explains, the second syllable of *forwarde* gets a beat.

[214] *With* must also get a beat in C.349 ***E****nter* ***i****n þenn, quoþ* ***h****e and* ***h****af þi wyf with þe.*

* x / x x x / x

Lo, **l**orde, with your **l**eue at your **l**ege heste

'Behold, lord, by your leave at your sovereign behest'

C.94

* / x x x / x

Ferre out in þe **f**elde and **f**eche3 mo geste3

'Far out on the land and bring more guests'

C.98

* x / x x x / x

Hov **w**an þou into þis **w**on in **w**ede3 so fowle

'How did you come into this place in garments so unbecoming'

C.140

* x / x x x / x

Þou **p**raysed me and my **p**lace ful **p**ouer and ful nede

'You honored me and my position very poorly and very inadequately'

C.146

* x / x x x / x

Ne **v**enged for no **v**ilte of **v**ice ne synne

'Nor sought vengeance for any meanness of vice or sin'

C.199

* x / x x x / x

Ne **p**ray hym for no **p**ite so **p**roud wat3 his wylle

'Nor pray to him for any pity so proud was his will'

C.232

*x / x x x / x

And **f**leme out of þe **f**olde al þat **f**lesch were3

'And drive out of the land all who have flesh'

C.287

*x / x x x / x

3e, **l**orde, with þy **l**eue sayde þe **l**ede þenne

'Yes, Lord, by your leave the man said then'

C.347

*x / x x x / x

And **s**ed þat I wyl **s**ave of þyse **s**er beste3

'And seed that I wish to save from these various beasts'

C.358

* x / x x x / x

Hym a3tsum in þat **a**rk as a**þ**el God lyked

'Him, as one of the eight in that ark as [the] noble God desired'

C.411

* / x x x / x

Kast vp on a **c**lyffe þer **c**ostes lay drye

'Cast up on a cliff where coasts lay dry'

C.460

*x / x x / x

O **f**ole3 in **f**olk **f**ele3 oþer-whyle

'O fools among mankind think occasionally'

P.121

* x / x x x / x[215]

Þen **h**urled on a **h**epe þe **h**elme and þe sterne

'Then fell in a heap the tiller and the rudder'

P.149

*x / x x x / x

3et **c**oruen þay þe **c**ordes and **k**est al þer-oute

'Nevertheless, they cut the cords and cast everything out of there'

P.153

*x / x x x / x

And **þ**rwe in at hit **þ**rote with-outen **þ**ret more

'And flung in at its throat without further compulsion'

P.267

[215] The *h-* of *hurled* elides the historical final *-e* of *þen* 'then' (< OE *þanne*).

In each case just listed, there is a word that is readily available for promotion since it is either a non-alliterating Tier II word or an alliterating Tier III word:

/ / x x x / x

Lo, **l**orde, with your **l**eue at your **l**ege heste

C.94

/ / x x / x

Ferre out in þe **f**elde and **f**eche3 mo geste3

C.98

/ / x x x / x

Hov **w**an þou into þis **w**on in **w**ede3 so fowle

C.140

x / x x / / x

Þou **p**raysed me and my **p**lace ful **p**ouer and ful nede

C.146

x / x x / / x

Ne **v**enged for no **v**ilte of **v**ice ne synne

C.199

x / x x / / x

Ne **p**ray hym for no **p**ite so **p**roud wat3 his wylle

C.232

x / / x x / x

And fleme out of þe folde al þat flesch were3

C.287

/ / x x x / x

3e, lorde, with þy leue sayde þe lede þenne

C.347

x / x x / / x

And sed þat I wyl save of þyse ser beste3

C.358

/ / x x x / x

Hym a3tsum in þat ark as aþel God lyked

C.411

/ / x x / x

Kast vp on a clyffe þer costes lay drye

C.460

/ /x x / x

O fole3 in folk fele3 oþer-whyle

P.121

/ / x x x / x

Þen hurled on a hepe þe helme and þe sterne

P.149

/ / x x x / x

ȝet coruen þay þe cordes and kest al þer-oute

P.153

x // x x /x

And þrwe in at hit þrote with-outen þret more

P.267

Further support for these metrical promotions comes from the fact that none threatens the Limit on Sequential Equivalent Feet. Even though almost all of these a-verses initially seem to have the proscribed pattern x/xxx/x (C.94a, C.140a, C.146a, C.199a, C.232a, C.287a, C.347a, C.358a, C.411a, P.149a, P.153a, and P.267a) or the proscribed pattern /xxx/x (C.98a and C.460a), not a single one of the a-verses has a promotable syllable available in the position that would produce the x/x/x/x pattern. Promotable words consistently occur where promotion produces verses compliant with the Limit on Sequential Equivalent Feet.

A-verses that initially seem to have a b-verse pattern thus are metrical through one of two ways. Some count as metrical because they comply with Yakovlev's full vowel principle, which allows b-verse patterns in the a-verse as long as a medial or final one-syllable dip has a full vowel, as in this example:

x / x x x / x

I keuered me a cumfort þat now is caȝt fro me

'I obtained for myself one consolation that now is taken from me'

P.485

Almost all other a-verses that seem at first to have b-verse patterns admit of metrical promotion without infringing on even alternation. The following verse may be an exception since the pattern seems acceptable in the b-verse:

x / x x x / x

Excuse me at þe court I may not com þere

'Excuse me at the court I [cannot] go there'

C.70

Excuse does not appear at the beginning of any b-verses in the corpus or in SGGK. Perhaps there is some additional constraint at play there. On the other hand, it may be that, following the model of verses with //xxx/x patterns, like C.94a above, *ex-* gets a beat to give the pattern //xxx/x. In any case, Yakovlev's constraint and a-verse metrical promotion together account for almost all apparent exceptions to the principle of metrical differentiation of the two half-lines.

This finding is powerful because it leads to closer, often fruitful, scrutiny of verses that challenge it. Some vexing Middle English alliterative a-verses resist this account of problematic a-verses because, like C.70a above, they seem to lack a promotable word. Consider the following verse, which comes dangerously close to the b-verse meter with its x/xxxx/x pattern and a verse-final reduced vowel. With its four-syllable dip, it has one of the environmental characteristics ideal for promotion, but the dip seems to lack an obvious candidate for a beat.

*x / x x x x / x

And bo3ed towarde þe bed and þe burne schamed

'And stepped toward the bed; and the knight was embarrassed'

SGGK.1189

Attempting to reduce the four-syllable dip to three by treating *toward* as one syllable would merely produce the pattern x/xxx/x, with a verse-final reduced vowel, which is even more certainly proscribed in the a-verse. Some readers might salvage the verse as metrical by omitting a final *-e* from the end of *bed* (making the scansion x/xxx/ a possibility). The thinking there might be that *bed*, as the object of the preposition of motion *towarde*, could qualify as accusative rather than dative. (The accusative form would not take final *-e*.) Such a reading is unappealing, though, because it would require abandonment of an otherwise disciplined observance of the assumptions detailed in Chapter One. A final reason why this verse is problematic is that it seems also to defy the present study's finding that extra-long dips have at least one syllable each that can be metrically stressed fairly readily through linguistic promotion. As a non-alliterating preposition, *toward* does not seem to qualify for metrical stress.

Manuscript evidence and semantic evidence help to salvage SGGK.1189a as metrical. There is support for treating *towarde* as the infinitive particle *to* plus the full verb *warde* 'look after, watch over, protect, guard'. As an infinitive, 'warde' gets a beat by default, and that beat would fix the problem. In the manuscript, the space between *to* and *warde* (SGGK.1189, folio 107a, line 5) is consistent with the proposed reading; moreover, clear

occurrences of the preposition 'toward' at C.672a (folio 66a, line 24) and SGGK.445a (folio 97a, line 5) appear as 'to ward', without an 'e'.[216]

This difference in spelling between passages that get a preposition and SGGK.1189a is consistent with reading 'to warde' as an infinitive construction. The suggestion that the Lady protects Gawain in fact is consistent with SGGK.1189b *and þe burne schamed* 'and the knight was embarrassed', since a knight would more properly provide than receive defense. The idea that the lady is approaching to 'watch over' the bed also accords with nearby SGGK.1194b *to loke quen he wakened* 'to see when he would awaken'.

Critical reception also supports the infinitive reading. In reviewing previous scholarly commentary on the seduction scenes in SGGK, Geraldine Heng calls into question other scholars' reliance on the term 'temptation':

> To call a seduction a 'temptation' in this instance ensures that the man and masculine desire are located at the center of our attention: it imagines a focal point determined by one gender, around which another is forced to revolve.[217]

The preposition 'toward' reading of SGGK.1189a, insofar as it emphasizes the Lady's physical motion only relative to Gawain, would participate in the dubious scholarly 'descriptions that... fix the centrality of the man'; the infinitive reading, in contrast, avoids

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[216] Manuscript observations were made using *Pearl, Cleanness, Patience and Sir Gawain: Reproduced in Facsimile from the Unique MS. Cotton Nero A.x in the British Museum*, ed. by Sir Israel Gollancz, Early English Text Society (London: Oxford University Press, 1923).

[217] Geraldine G. Heng, 'A Woman Wants: The Lady, *Gawain*, and the Forms of Seduction', *The Yale Journal of Criticism, 5* (1992), pp. 101-34 (101).

inconsistency with the tenor of the seduction passages and accords with Heng's renovation of the centrality of the Lady.[218]

SGGK.1210-12 provide additional semantic evidence:

> Now ar ȝe tan as-tyt! Bot true vus may schape,
> I schal bynde yow in your bedde, þat be ȝe trayst:
> Al laȝande þe lady lanced þo bourdez.
> '"Now you are quickly trapped! Unless [a] truce can be arranged between us,
> I shall bind you in your bed; you may be sure of that!"
> Fully smiling, the lady uttered those jests.'
>
> SGGK.1210-12

The suggestion provided by SGGK.1189 *to warde* that the lady is there to 'protect' Gawain is consistent with the fact that in SGGK.1210-12 it is only in jest that the lady speaks of doing him harm.[219] The strong case for reading SGGK.1189a *warde* as a full verb infinitive and for restoring the space between *to* and *warde* provides SGGK.1189a with the beat necessary to break up the sequence of four consecutive metrically unstressed syllables:

[218] Heng, 'Woman', p. 102.
[219] On the tension between play and seriousness in the interactions between Gawain and the Lady, see Heng, 'Woman', p. 116: 'The game is, of course, a genuine competition of wills and discourses, the underlying seriousness of which is disguised by its surface gaiety.'

x / x x / x x / x

And boȝed to warde þe bed and þe burne schamed[220]

'And approached to watch over the bed; and the knight was embarrassed'

SGGK.1189

The verse thus has three beats by default and is consistent with the scarcity of four-syllable dips in the corpus.

This reading of SGGK.1189 appears to be a new one. A survey of five editions, including Tolkien, Gordon, and Davis' and Israel Gollancz's separate classic editions, uncovers no previous infinitival reading nor editorial mention of such a possibility.[221] Similarly, all five MdnE renderings randomly surveyed, including Marie Borroff's translation and Richard Morris' marginal gloss, construe the manuscript's 'to warde' as a preposition.[222] Two translations have 'towards', one 'toward', and one 'for' (Borroff's 'bound

[220] The verse contains the suggestion discussed here and therefore is not an exact quotation from the source; likewise, the corresponding translation has been altered.

[221] See SGGK.1189 in *The Poems of the Pearl Manuscript: Pearl, Cleanness, Patience, Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, ed. by Andrew and Waldron; *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, ed. by Tolkien, Gordon, and Davis; *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, ed. by Sir Israel Gollancz, Early English Text Society, Original Series, 210 (London: Oxford University Press, 1940); *Pearl, Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, ed. by A. C. Cawley, Everyman's Library: Romance, 346 (London: J. M. Dent & Sons, 1962); and *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight, Pearl, Cleanness, Patience*, ed. by J. J. Anderson, 2nd edn, Everyman (London: J.M. Dent, 1996). No footnotes or endnotes in these editions mention the line.

[222] See SGGK.1189 in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight: A New Verse Translation*, trans. by Marie Borroff (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1967); *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, ed. by Richard Morris, 2nd rev. edn, Early English Text Society, Original Series, 4 (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner & Co., 1912); *The Pearl Poems: An Omnibus Edition*, ed. and trans. by William Vantuono; and *The Pearl-Poet: His Complete Works*, trans. by Margaret Williams (New York: Random House, 1967). See also *Romance Vision and Satire: English Alliterative Poems of the Fourteenth Century*, trans. by Jessie L. Weston (Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1912), p. 45.

for his bed'). Morris' hyphenated gloss 'to-warde' signals the space between the two words in the manuscript, but nevertheless implies the preposition.

This chapter has built on preceding chapters in several ways. In discussing metrical promotion in the Middle English alliterative long line, it has used Chapter Two's demonstration of the b-verse's template meter. Chapter Three's demonstration of three-beat a-verses' rhythmically ameliorating effect on poems opened the possibility consummated in this chapter of the linguistic promotion of syllables in a-verses that already have two beats. Founded on a multifaceted theoretical apparatus, these promotions garner further support from the fact that the promotions never conflict with Chapter Four's Limit on Sequential Equivalent Feet. Fully within the bounds of historical English poetic precedent, established Middle English alliterative metrical principles, and conventions of promotion already widely observed by metrists, these promotions account for formerly problematic verses. Extra-long dips, awkwardly long verse-end dips, and a-verses that offend with their b-verse metrical patterns all disappear through acknowledgment of the poet's reliance on both linguistic and metrical promotion.

Conclusion: Metrical Regions in the Long Line

This study has concerned itself primarily with the metricality of a multitude of verses and verse segments. The investigation conveniently has built a foundation for a discussion of the varying degrees of departure from meter. Bruce Hayes has considered this gradient and speculated about 'a metric of complexity, which measures how far a line deviates from perfect correspondence to the metrical ideal'.[223] Such a metric indexes metrical tension in that it delineates the competing influences of various determinants of poetic prominence. Insofar as all discussion of metrical processes in the present study have gestured to these competing pressures, the topic of tension has lingered in the background. As a way of summarizing the study's findings, this section of the study gives more explicit expression to the mechanism of tension in the unrhymed Middle English alliterative long line.

A long-enduring conception of Middle English alliterative verse is becoming obsolete and a rich discussion about metrical tension will be one of the results of this shift. For centuries scholars have called the meter of this verse 'strong-stress', a term that denotes a meter with steady beat-counts and varying counts of metrically unstressed syllables per verse. The findings of this dissertation necessitate an inversion of this model: The number of metrical beats per line varies between four and five, while the distribution of metrically unstressed syllables reflects adherence to strict regulation. Part of what is at stake in this

[223] Bruce Philip Hayes, 'A Grid-Based Theory of English Meter', *Linguistic Inquiry,* 14 (1983), pp. 357-93 (358).

reformulation is the capacity for what Wimsatt and Beardsley call 'interplay' and 'tension'.[224] They write that strong-stress meter is limited in its capacity for interplay. Strong-stress meter is indeed limited, so vindicating Middle English alliterative verse as a syllable-counting meter is crucial.

In writing that Middle English alliterative verse 'has been judged incapable of modulation', Kane touches on the issue of tension in this poetry. Working in this way to recover poems like *Cleanness* and *Patience* as products of rigorous syllable-counting leads to the revelation of lively tension. The path from syllable-counting to tension is complex, though. Many factors in the long line pressure rhythms one way or another; moreover, many of the competing pressures do not necessarily count as metrical tension, or, if called metrical tension at least do not preside over the starkest clashes between metrical expectation and linguistic prescription. In any given line, standard word accent within a polysyllabic word, standard sentence accent in a phrase, alliteration, the b-verse template, the norm (not to say requirement) of two beats per verse, and the principle of metrical differentiation of the two half-lines (as described in Chapter One) all make their marks on patterns of metrical stress. All of these pressures should be acknowledged. One should then go a step further to identify which pressures are ornamental and which directly engage the gap between normal speech and poetry.

There are, first of all, language-internal pressures competing with each other. These pressures ultimately support metrical tension, but their interactions amongst themselves should not be confused with metrical tension. The results of these pressures inevitably

[224] Wimsatt and Beardsley, 'Concept', p. 597.

influence the shape of the long line since they determine which syllables come to the long line with the attribute of linguistic accent. Since that designation happens within the language, though, conflicting factors restricted to the language cannot be considered coercion of prominence by the meter. There is, for example, a competition between the lapse constraint discussed in Chapter Five and the tendency for only the semantically heaviest words (like nouns and nonfinite verbs) to attract accent. The former factor seeks to promote linguistically unaccented syllables when many of them occur consecutively; the latter resists accenting semantically weak words (like prepositions and pronouns). The direct competition between these two factors is not properly considered metrical tension. Only when a metrical requirement begins to conflict with one of the principles does metrical tension occur. If the grammatical hierarchy seems to indicate that an a-verse should have exactly one beat instead of the minimum of two, and there is also an extra-long dip, then there is tension between the metrical requirement of a minimum beat-count and the grammatical hierarchy. In that scenario there is also a kind of tension between the lapse constraint, which joins the metrical requirement in favoring a second beat, and the grammatical hierarchy. The first kind of tension is a metrical tension while the second kind is a linguistic tension.

The lapse constraint and the demands of the grammatical hierarchy spar in some contexts and the results vary. When blindly privileging the grammatical hierarchy would produce extra-long dips, the lapse constraint is challenged. Linguistic promotion results. There is a different result when the grammatical hierarchy calls for three-syllable dips. Since the lapse constraint exerts pressure to reduce all dips that are longer than two

syllables, three-syllable dips exist only in spite of the lapse constraint. In such dips, the grammatical hierarchy can be said to have prevailed. In cases where initial scansions according to the grammatical hierarchy produce dips no longer than two syllables in length, the dips threaten neither the lapse constraint nor the grammatical hierarchy; indeed, the threshold of felicity, between two- and three-syllable dips, may prove fruitful ground for more nuanced inquiry into the distribution of two-syllable dips versus that of three-syllable dips. The most important point here, though, is that the frequent occurrence of apparent extra-long dips that are reduced to two shorter dips and the presence of three-syllable dips that resist reduction add an element of phonological equilibrium that fixes Middle English alliterative verse more firmly to normal speech.

The *Gawain*-poet's word choices influence the push-and-pull of the lapse constraint and the grammatical hierarchy. By populating extra-long dips with words that are usually metrically unstressed but that are nevertheless promotable (non-alliterating Tier II words like verbs and adverbs and alliterating Tier III words like prepositions and pronouns), he renders the lapse constraint's infringement on the grammatical hierarchy minimal. The words that would have to be treated as metrically stressed are words that only minimally threaten the grammatical hierarchy. In these situations, careless word choice could have created great conflict between the lapse constraint and the grammatical hierarchy; the poet, though, has actually written lines that minimize the potential affront to both principles.

Factors internal to the poetry also influence metrical stress. The position of the caesura, for example, affects expectations about where syntactic constructions will end and

begin and about where beats will fall.[225] Alliteration is another source of modulation. Convergence of alliteration and metrical stress is the norm, but alliteration sometimes occurs without metrical stress and metrical stress sometimes occurs without alliteration. Kane comments on the competition between alliteration and semantic influences on metrical stress:

> Depending on the meaning of the line in the context, the adjacency of the two kinds of distinction, phonetic emphasis [read: 'linguistic accent'] and alliteration, either results in level stress (itself a kind of modulation) or raises doubt about which is dominant.[226]

There are, therefore, in addition to language-internal pressures, features of the poetry that affect which syllables become prominent.

As the present survey moves from the language into the long line, the competing influences on metrical stress begin to have stronger claims to being sources of metrical tension. There is the line-wide requirement of metrical differentiation of the two half-lines that exerts pressure. Verses like C.94a ***Lo, lorde, with your leue*** (//xxx/x), which Chapter Five discussed, get the scansions they do in part because of the need to avoid the x/xxx/x pattern so common in the b-verse. This kind of adjustment is not evidence of the kind of tension in Chaucer's iambic pentameter. There is no a-verse template specifically calling for a beat in the verse-initial position of C.94a. Still, there are line-wide requirements that support a beat there, so there must be some tension at play.

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[225] Kane, 'Music', p. 49, mentions this factor.
[226] Kane, 'Music', p. 52.

Norms in beat-counts per verse are another good example of a source of tension subtler than that found in Chaucer. Identifying the norm of two beats per verse as a source of tension may at first seem like a concession to two-beat theorists, but since most a-verses clearly have exactly two beats, this 'norm' actually has never been in question. What has been at issue is the legitimacy of reducing apparent three-beat a-verses to two-beat verses. That two beats is the norm is clear from a number of facts. One of these facts is how the reader handles the results of various initial scansions. If an initial scansion, with strict adherence to the grammatical hierarchy, leaves an a-verse with only one beat, the reader will quickly seek out, find, and promote a non-alliterating Tier II or alliterating Tier III word. In contrast, if an initial scansion leaves an a-verse with two beats and no irregularities like extra-long dips, no such search ensues, and any 'promotable' word will be left unpromoted. The attentive reader readily remains aware of the normal a-verse beat-count.

Because of this norm, in the case of a-verses that get three beats——whether because of the presence of three obvious beats or because of linguistic promotion——there is a minimal metrical tension. Even though Chapter Three demonstrates that such a-verses are fully metrical, their departure from the norm of two beats per a-verse generates metrical tension. It should be noted that treating such longer a-verses as metrical sources of tolerable tension rather than as unmetrical garners support from the source of the word 'tension' itself. It comes from the Latin *tensus*, which means simply 'stretched'. In observing various principles of the long line, such as the principle of metrical differentiation of the two half-lines (i.e., the principle that the sets of a-verse and b-verse metrical patterns are mutually exclusive), the Multisyllabic Dip Limit and One-Syllable Dip Preference of

Chapter Three, and the Limit on Sequential Equivalent Feet and its corollaries of Chapter Four, the three-beat a-verse remains well within the grasp of meter. Crowded a-verses also contribute to rhythmic consistency, as demonstrated in Chapter Three. In eschewing the flexible norm of two beats per verse, though, the three-beat a-verse constitutes poetic modulation and generates tension.

Multiple linguistic and metrical influences on syllable prominence are evident in the verse from SGGK discussed at the end of Chapter Five. SGGK.1189a *And boȝed to warde þe bed* exhibits the interplay of linguistic accentuation, metrical stress, word category, and semantics that makes Middle English alliterative verse vibrant. It is precisely the initial inclination to construe the manuscript's *to warde* as a typical, unaccented preposition that makes the verse rhythmically rich. The reader is aware of the semantic viability of the preposition reading and the norm of two beats per verse. The initial scansion might be x/xxxx/x. Against those influences, the reader experiences also the linguistic infelicity of the extra-long dip. This latter pressure prompts considerations of alternative readings and the initial reading subsides to recognition of the superior semantic viability and the metricality of the infinitive reading *to warde* 'to watch over'. In SGGK, the pressures of the grammatical hierarchy, the lapse constraint, semantics, and meter make even word class negotiable. Far from metrically exceptional, SGGK.1189a epitomizes Middle English alliterative modulation.

Metrical tension is one product of all of the variety of competing pressures, and it is most evident in the long line contexts that most resemble Chaucer's iambic pentameter. Metrical tension is the product of a mismatch between linguistic accent and metrical stress.

Since in the purest inductive meter, linguistic accent and metrical stress will coincide strictly, poetry will have tension insofar as its meter includes deductive elements.

The strict syllable-counting in the b-verse results in direct coercion of prominence in Middle English alliterative verse. It is in the second half-line where metrical tension comparable to Chaucer's is most evident. It may well be that the erroneous notion of the a-verse as metrically unsystematic has been encouraged, if not caused, by the role of competing pressures there. In the a-verse, the 'tensions' are real but varied and rarely directly demonstrable. In the b-verse, the demotions described in Chapter Two and the promotions described in Chapter Five are evidence of metrical tension akin to Chaucer's. Whether metrical adjustments go against the grain of phrasal accentuation (as inferred using the grammatical hierarchy) or word accent (i.e., what historical lexical phonology indicates about individual words' pronunciations), the adjustments evince conflict between syllables' linguistic and metrical status.

There is yet another kind of tension in Middle English alliterative verse, one that teeters between linguistic and metrical. A topic that Chapter One and Chapter Five both quietly postponed is the precise metrical status of compound words. With minimal discussion, Chapter One's methodological notes include the assumption that both elements of compound words get beats. Later, Chapter Five avoided this topic even though it overlaps with the topic of metrical promotion. The present discussion of tension offers a more suitable theoretical framework for discussing compounds.

Because each of the two roots in such words as *ȝe-lyddez* (/x/x) has some degree of linguistic accent, it is reasonable to give the compound two beats. Donka Minkova calls

metrical stress on *lyddez* in SGGK.446 *And hit lyfte vp þe yȝe-lyddez and loked ful brode* 'unambiguous metrical promotion of the second root'.[227] Since it is not clear that either syllable in question is ever fully unaccented, though, the term 'metrical promotion' warrants examination. There is a distinct circumstance that makes Minkova's assessment possible. While both *y-* and *-lyd-* are linguistically accented, Minkova assumes less linguistic accentuation on *lyddez* than on *yȝe*, calling the contour of compounds 'cascading stress'.[228] For Minkova, metrical stress on a secondarily accented syllable like *-lyd-* counts as metrical promotion. One could think of compounds with two beats as exhibiting a form of metrical promotion in Middle English alliterative verse. In turn, such compounds contribute to metrical tension because of the conflict between the metrical stress of the second element and this element's mere secondary linguistic accent.

A more pressing issue, and one with particularly interesting ramifications for assessments of tension, is the metrical status of compounds in which two elements' roots are adjacent, rather than separated by a syllable (as *yȝ-* is from *lyd-* by the historical *-e*; ME *yȝe* < OE *ēg(a)ge*). The metrical status of compounds like P.102a *crossayl* 'sail yard' (< ON *kross* + OE *segl*) requires further explication. Since linguistic accent itself depends on more than syllables' morphological status and (prosodic) phonological context, it is not enough to assume primary linguistic accent followed by secondary linguistic accent and promotion of the secondary linguistic accent to produce the scansion //. As the 'elevator operator' example in Chapter Five demonstrates, differences in speech tempo can translate to widely

[227] Donka Minkova, *Alliteration and Sound Change in Early English*, Cambridge Studies in Linguistics, 101 (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2003), p. 47.
[228] Minkova, *Alliteration*, p. 30, item 3. Minkova uses the term 'stress' for what the present study calls 'linguistic accent'.

varying accentual patterns of otherwise identical utterances. The role of tempo in the present discussion is not to serve as a vehicle for determining the linguistic accentual status of *crossayl* and then the compound's contribution to tension. Instead, tempo is better thought of as a product of tension established on other grounds. If the meter calls for two adjacent roots in a compound word to get metrical stress, then the meter might properly be said to influence tempo as a way to ensure an acceptable pattern of metrical stress. In order to align with metrical expectation, a reader might slow the rate of speech, consequently extend the space between adjacent candidates for accentuation, create the environment for a syllable to emerge from weakness, and actually generate a metrically unstressed syllable.[229]

This adjustment of tempo constitutes something different from simple metrical promotion and simple linguistic promotion. Metrical promotion involves treating linguistically unaccented syllables as metrically stressed. Linguistic promotion involves occasional shifts of typically weakly accented words to linguistic accent. What happens with adjacent candidates for metrical stress is that one of multiple possible patterns of linguistic accentuation (all equally viable in normal speech) is indicated by the meter. Whether this phenomenon properly qualifies as promotion may be merely a semantic issue.

Since this section aims primarily to investigate tension, these observations are helpful. The kind of tension coming from clashing metrical stresses may not be that of metrical stress against linguistic accent. It may be instead that in breaking the flow of alternation between prominence and weakness, clashing metrical stresses work against the

[229] For the influence of English poetic meters and clashing linguistic accents on tempo, see Thomas Monroe Cable, 'Clashing Stress in the Metres of Old, Middle, and Renaissance English', in *English Historical Metrics*, ed. by C. B. McCully and J. J. Anderson (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1996), pp. 7-29.

grain of English's tendency toward even temporal spacing between linguistically accented syllables. In calling for two consecutive metrically stressed syllables, clashing metrical stresses engage with stress-timing itself.

The tension that clashing metrical stresses introduce is linguistic in that this juxtaposition of candidates for ictus showcases two competing linguistic pressures. One the one hand, the language favors alternation of weakness and prominence. On the other hand, rules of phonology and syntax call for linguistic accentuation of particular syllables, like both of those in *crossayl*. As a compromise between the two pressures, the speaker can add a pause between linguistic accents.

This phenomenon that introduces linguistic tension between prominence-alternation and phonosyntactic convention also introduces metrical tension insofar as meter has a stake in a particular clash. Where the meter demands two beats from a pair of adjacent syllables (e.g., if they are the only candidates for ictus in a b-verse), the meter supports rules calling for linguistic accentuation of both elements. Simultaneously, the meter in such cases opposes the tendency toward prominence-alternation and even stress-timing. By the same token, where the meter demands subordination of one of the pair of ictus candidates, the meter finds itself in accord with even stress-timing but in contention with phonosyntactic accentuation rules. In this way, adjacent candidates for ictus may not only exhibit linguistic tension, but also serve as a venue for metrical tension.

All of this new theoretical territory in metrical tension and competition amongst influences on metrical stress is a natural outgrowth of the combination of assumptions presented in Chapter One. Scholarly consensus on the metrical significance of the caesura

has provided an important foundation. Growing consensus on the b-verse requirements of two beats, exactly one verse-final offbeat, and a first beat flanked by one short dip and one multisyllabic dip (or one multisyllabic dip and one short dip) has made possible the discussions of demotion in Chapter Two and findings on the a-verse meter in Chapters Three, Four, and Five. More generally, acceptance of the idea that metrically unstressed syllables are counted in the alliterative long line provided motivation for the entire analysis. Wider acceptance promises to energize work in the field even further.

This foundation of principles has combined with Chapter One's technical assumptions to produce a coherent body of plausible scansions. The notion that historical final *-e* has metrical significance everywhere now stands on firmer ground. Adherence to ten Brink's rules for elision solves problems, and only sparing invocation of syncope and apocope produces a collection of scansions amenable to simple metrical generalizations. The case for strict metrical differentiation of the two half-lines is stronger. The assumptions also lead naturally to a conclusion that three-beat a-verses are legitimate. As Chapter Four drives home, all of the assumptions also lead to scansions that show little tolerance for sequential equivalent feet.

As Chapter Two explains, there were many reasons to subject the b-verse to all of these assumptions before examining the a-verse. One of the best reasons, though, is the fact that this approach ensured proper emphasis would be given to the distinction between deductive and inductive meter. The account of b-verse demotion in that chapter demonstrated the location-specific operation of deductive metrical features in the long line. It asserted that critical environmental factors make demotion possible, namely a specific,

local metrical template; infrequent calls for demotion; contexts that lead to two-syllable dips rather than dips of three or more syllables; and verse-medial demotable syllables. Chapter Two thus provided a crucial theoretical framework for later exploration of the a-verse. Showing in Chapter Three that the a-verse can, sometimes must, have three beats depended on the conclusion that the a-verse falls far short of the b-verse's environments for demotion. Chapter Two's characterization of the b-verse also indirectly fortifies Chapter Four's account of metrical asymmetry within the a-verse. That the Clashing Asymmetry Principle and the Limit on Sequential Iambs hold up even without any a-verse demotion certainly is a testament to these two metrical principles and to the study's account of demotion in the alliterative long line.

In addition to establishing the legitimacy of three-beat a-verses, Chapter Three reconciles the growing popularity of the principle of metrical differentiation of the two half-lines with the Rhythmic Consistency Theory. Even though the poet allows no b-verse metrical pattern in the a-verse, an unmistakable rhythmic coherence emerges when one allows three-beat a-verses. Under the Rhythmic Consistency Theory, balanced counts of types of dips result directly from giving the occasional crowded a-verse more than the normal two beats. Both the theoretical and empirical support for this view should put to rest the troublingly popular notion that the a-verse has only two beats.

Chapter Four builds on Chapter Three's discrimination between troublingly artificial metrical principles, such as two beats per a-verse, and substantive principles of consistent rhythm. It reinforces the notion that metrical differentiation of the two half-lines and rhythmic consistency can coexist. In identifying limits on sequential iambic feet and on

other types of redundancy, the chapter extends the reach of the general intolerance for Chaucerian repetition. Since the principles of differentiation govern both sides of the half-line, they lead inevitably to a kind of balance in which redundancy is absent but in which a steady, proportionally consistent flow of beats separated by zero, one, two, and three syllables issues from every poetic passage.

In Chapter Five multiple ideas from all preceding chapters converge. The theme of promotion dominates the chapter, but it provides a vehicle for mapping the important topics of the dissertation. Promotion in the Middle English alliterative verse is a variegated phenomenon with as many faces as there are metrical regions in the long line. Because each region is beholden to a unique commixture of deductive meter and inductive meter, metrical coercion varies by region, in nature, and in potency.

With its fixed orientation toward the template, b-verse promotion closely resembles the b-verse demotion described in Chapter Two. The difference in precise location makes a difference for the nature of the mechanism, however. Promotion of the b-verse's penultimate syllable is a product of the dominance of deductive meter there: The penultimate syllable of the verse must get a beat. Promotion earlier in the b-verse similarly answers to issues of template, but since the exact location of the b-verse's first beat varies slightly, inductive meter joins deductive meter, and words' parts of speech emerge as important considerations.

Promotions that turn would-be one-beat a-verses into standard a-verses also answer to a coercive metrical requirement. The norm of two beats per a-verse motivates such promotions, but since the exact location of the beat can vary, inductive meter again plays a

role in the coercion. In turn, promotions that produce three-beat a-verses go against the grain of, rather than comply with, the same norm, and it is here that inductive meter begins to loom even larger than deductive meter. It is clear that it is inductive meter that motivates such promotions because the cue comes from the language itself, whose lapse constraint requires an additional beat.

The fourth type of promotion, which eliminates verse-final three-syllable dips, operates similarly. The fifth type of promotion, which turns problematic a-verse patterns like x/xxx/x into more acceptable patterns like //xxx/x, also mixes both deductive and inductive elements. The prohibition against the x/xxx/x pattern in the a-verse calls for some correction, and the inductive element indicates a position for the correction insofar as only some syllables have a claim to prominence, such as non-alliterating adverbs. These various kinds of adjustment put on display the mixtures of deductive and inductive meter that hold sway in the long line. The adjustments also showcase other themes of the dissertation since they clearly operate in harmony with the metrical principles outlined in Chapters Three and Four. The promotions never challenge—indeed, often seem crafted with awareness of—the Multisyllabic Dip Limit and the Limit on Sequential Equivalent Feet.

The complementary relations between this study's host of assumptions and discoveries constitute what Robert Fulk refers to as a 'method of building probability by accounting for a wide variety of phenomena'.[230] One way to confirm a hypothesis is to demonstrate that it explains several different phenomena and that it is improbable that

[230] Fulk, *History*, 16.

those several phenomena are all coincidences. The assumptions of this study thus lead to a simpler account of the variety of verses in the corpus.

If one takes a step back, an even simpler generalization emerges. Consider where this study began. Metrists and more casual readers alike have long associated the collection of offbeats in Middle English alliterative verse with disorder. The refrain is 'a gabble of weaker syllables'. Some MdnE readers still come away from the verse puzzled by apparent randomness, and those readers are primed, in fact, for another error in scholarly assessment: Metrists past and present have insisted that beat-counts remain constant, that therein lies rich regularity in the craft. This dissertation has presented evidence against this view of beat-counts. 'Variable' describes the count better than 'fixed' does. Fixed beat-counts would result in drastic rhythmic differences between the a-verse and b-verse; dispensation to vary those counts results in drastic realignment of rhythm.

The reassessment of the entire meter comes full circle when one follows up on the ramifications of variable beat-counts. Metrically unstressed syllables fall into strikingly consistent patterns within this framework. The only regularity they fall short of, in fact, is the hyper-redundancy of same-length dips occurring one after the other in sequences of beat-dip-beat-dip.... Strings of metrically unstressed syllables are subject to specific linguistic and metrical guidelines. The lapse constraint and the b-verse template entail definable distributions of these types of syllables. Chapter Three's tallies show that even without precise prescriptions for where metrically unstressed syllables must occur in a-verses, there are characteristic proportions of types of dips that correspond to proportions in the b-verse. This realization at least demonstrates some minimal degree of management of metrically

unstressed syllables and leaves open the possibility that there is a kind of syllable-counting yet undiscovered. The study thus revives a critical point about meter that readers raised on only MdnE meters are at risk of failing to assimilate. The accentual-syllabic poetry of Chaucer, Shakespeare, and Milton leaves readers equating meter with repetitive counts of easily identifiable types of units, namely syllables. Meter inheres no less, though, in verse with systematic, if not exactly repetitive, arrangements of units that the original poets, and probably their readers, readily perceived.

These concrete and theoretical findings have several benefits. Putter, Jefferson, and Stokes point out that such advances are valuable for editorial work, literary appreciation, and literary criticism.[231] Progress also will support the work of metrists concerned with establishing a relation between Old English and Middle English poetry. Yakovlev shows such a concern in concluding:

> The biggest change that occurred between the composition of the extant Old English and early Middle English alliterative poems was the transition from the morphological to the accentual principle of correlating linguistic units and metrical positions.[232]

Progress in metrics also has consequences for literary pedagogy. Part of Cole's argument is that advances in metrics make the poetry more accessible to students:

[231] Putter, Jefferson, and Stokes, *Studies*, pp. 14-16.
[232] Yakovlev, *Development*, p. 279.

> At the heart of this study lies the conviction that the meters of these poems are both knowable and teachable, both in the fourteenth and the twenty-first centuries.[233]

This dissertation supports these larger projects. In shedding light on the differences between meter and rhythm, between inductive and deductive meter, and between metrical stress and linguistic accent, this study has explored the boundaries of what makes a poetic prosody English and has furthered the endeavor to explain a significant component of the English literary heritage.

[233] Cole, *Rum*, p. 156.

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